THE SPIRIT OF Meekneſs,

Recommended for the Reducing of the Erroneous AND Such as have Diſſented From the

CHURCH OF England.

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Tho. Wellington

To the Honoured

John Pezy Esq;

One of His MAJESTIES Justices of the Peace, for the County of *Middlesex*.

SIR,

I Will not offend you by Publishing my Obligations to You, And I hope I shall not offend You by the Dedication of this small Treatise, as I

am ſure I ſhould if there were the leaſt expreſſion in it of Diſloyalty to the *KING*, or Diſaffection to the Church of *England*; And yet I muſt acknowledge that I expoſe it to Publick view, partly that I may vindicate my ſelf from the guilt of ſome Aſperſions by which others have endeavoured to *Expoſe* me, as one Schiſmatically enclined.

In the late times of Uſurpation, I had no ſooner left the *Univerſity* and began to Preach, but there was a

Caveat

Caveat entred againſt me in the Book of *Cromwells Tryals of Miniſters* amongſt thoſe who were accounted Epiſcopal-men, by one (as I had cauſe to ſuſpect) who afterwards conformed to the Church, and became my unſucceſsful competitor ſince I came to *London*. I was thereby forced to leave my Native County, and to live a precarious Life for ſome Years, till His Majeſties Return. But I bleſs God there never was (and I hope never ſhall be)

any objection against my Conversation.

There are some now who would represent me to the World as a dissembling dissatisfied *Conformist*, and Consequently both a great Hypocrite, and a very great Fool. The greatest cause of this report, hath proceeded from my Treating Dissenters so, that I might gain upon their Affections, as being the best way to bring them to Conformity to the Church: and which hath been the good

effect

effect of it, their being my Auditors. It is a ſad caſe that it ſhould be our Duty and our great Concern to bring thoſe to the Communion of the Church who have Separated from it, and yet our great Reproach if they become our Hearers.

But *I* may well be contented and account it an honour to be reproached, conſidering that it hath been of late the lot of ſome of the moſt Eminent Divines in this Age; Men whoſe *Works* have not only *praiſed them*

in this City, but in both the Universities & throughout this Nation (and some other Countries) and have been an eminent means to fix sound Principles, not only in great numbers of the Laity, but of the Clergy likewise. Those men who have done the greatest Service to the Church are reproached and scorned by a furious sort of men that pretend most regard to it: But as those *Worthys* cannot but have great satisfaction from themselves, in that they have

have discharged their duties to God in their Ministerial Function; so have I, And the good success which it hath pleased God to give me by bringing many, not only to the Church, but to both the Sacraments who had from their Cradles despised the Ordinances of the Christian Religion, is a Satisfaction to me which outweighs all the reproaches which heady & inconsiderative men can heap upon me.

I bless God I can with a good conscience declare to the

the World, that I ever designed to do good by my Ministry according to my mean Capacity; and to that end I have alwayes set my self against the two great evils of the Age, *Division* and *Debauchery*. I have likewise made it my business upon all occasions to commend the Discipline and Methods of the Church of *England*, as tending more to the promotion of true Holiness, than any of those Devices which have been *formed against Her*, and which God never *prospered*;

red; and I am ſure the ſame will appear to be my deſign in this Treatiſe, which I humbly offer to you.

I know no Perſon, to whom I can with more confidence preſent it, than to your ſelf. *I* have taken occaſion in it to ſhew the neceſſity of Obedience to *Government*, & That I am ſure is well pleaſing to you; for I am confident there is not a day paſſeth, but all that are admitted into your company may take notice of your affectionate Loyalty to the King. *I*

I have commended a hearty compliance with the Rules and Orders of the Church, than which nothing is more acceptable to you, as appears by your great delight in Epiſcopal Authors, the great eſteem which you have for the conformable Clergy, and your diligence in Suppreſſing the Conventicles: and which is the greateſt expreſſion of ſincerity, your early attendance every day upon the Publick Prayers of the Church.

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My chief design in it, is to perswade the People to treat those who have Dissented, with a *Spirit of Meekness*; & I am sure that is very agreeable to Your Disposition, for it hath been your earnest desire and request to men of stubborn humors, that they would not make themselves obnoxious to the just severity of the Laws, but live in peaceable obedience to Government. That you are of this temper, appear'd likewise by your great displeasure when you heard of complaints

plaints made by the Dissenters, of some Affronts and Incivilities that were offered to them when they came to the Church; which was the only occasion of this discourse, for which I am sure I shall not suffer in the esteem of sober and good men.

Sir, I know your Soul abhors Flattery, and so does mine. I would not therefore have mention'd these things, if I did not fear that some ill men should misrepresent you, as they have done others

others who are truly Zealous for the good both of Church and State.

That the God of Heaven may Prolong your dayes, & continue to you the great Opportunities of doing good, both in your Publick and Private Capacity, is and shall be the hearty Prayer of,

Ever Honored Sir,

Your most Obliged

and Devoted Servant,

William Smythies.

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THE SPIRIT of MEEKNESS

GAL. Chap. 6. Ver. 1.

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are Spiritual, reſtore ſuch a one in the Spirit of Meekneſs, conſidering thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted.

THE great deſign of the Apoſtle in this Epiſtle, is to vindicate himſelf from the Aſperſions of falſe Teachers, and to keep the *Galatians* from aſperſing one another. There were two things charged againſt him. One was, that he had no right to be

an Apoſtle; and the other was, that he Preached falſe Doctrine. But this is no part of my preſent Buſineſs: But to conſider the ſecond, *viz.* The Apoſtles great care to keep the *Galatians* in that Peace and Unity which the Goſpel, to which they were newly converted, does require. There was a very great heat amongſt them, inſomuch that the Apoſtle was afraid leſt they ſhould *bite and devour one another, and be conſumed one of another*, Ch. 5. v. 15. The conteſt was about *Chriſtian Liberty*. And becauſe there is at this day a great ſtir about it, I think it neceſſary by the way, to ſhew what that Chriſtian Liberty was.

It was not a Liberty for every Chriſtian to refuſe the Orders of the Church, and if the Governours of it did not pleaſe them in what was required, or ſhew a ſpecial command from God for every indifferent thing which was preſcribed for Order and Decency; preſently to turn their backs, and heap up Teachers to themſelves

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in oppoſition to their Governours. I am ſure that had been an Unchriſtian Liberty, for it had been a Liberty to throw Chriſtianity out of the World ſo ſoon as it came into it: Or to make it the moſt ugly and deformed Religion in the World. If when the Apoſtle told the *Corinthians*, that at his *coming to them* he would ſet things *in order*; they had ſent him word that they would not obſerve his orders, unleſs they were by ſpecial Revelation from God; Or they would be Judges whether his orders were fit to be Received; It would have made ſtrange work in the Chriſtian Church, and ſpared the enemies of it the trouble of perſecuting Chriſtians, for the Stubborn and ſelf-conceited, if their numbers had been ſufficient, would have perſecuted the Orthordox, and ſuch as were of the moſt Chriſtian, humble, and ſubmiſſive tempers.

The Chriſtian Liberty, which we read ſo much of was quite another

thing. There were ſome Judaizing Chriſtians amongſt the *Galatians*. They thought that they muſt as well obſerve the Law of *Moſes*, as the Law of Chriſt, or elſe they could not be juſtified and ſaved. The Apoſtle to rectify their miſtakes, tells them that they were at liberty from that *Yoke*, and that they ought to take that Liberty. *Behold, I* Paul *ſay unto you, that if you are Circumciſed, Chriſt ſhall profit you nothing*, c. 5. v. 2. But however, leſt that ſhould be of dangerous Conſequence, he takes care to prevent two great evils which might enſue: One was in reference to themſelves, and the other was in reference to their miſled and diſſatisfied Brethren. He was afraid, as to the firſt, that this Chriſtian liberty ſhould be an occaſion of Licentiouſneſs, and therefore admoniſhes them, that they ſhould not *uſe this liberty, as an occaſion to the Fleſh*, v. 13. And he was afraid that heats of Opinion ſhould be the Occaſion of coldneſs of affection,

on, and therefore adds imediately in the ſame verſe, *but by love ſerve one another*; and for fear they ſhould not, he preſſeth to them the Duty of Brotherly love, as that which is a fruit of the Spirit of God: and in the concluſion of the Chapter he cautions them againſt two great evils which obſtruct it; *Vain glory* and *Envy*. *Vain glory* is a branch of Pride, by which a man ſeeks to be uppermoſt, and they that are guilty of it do ſeldom think they can ſtand high enough in their Reputations unleſs they tread upon their Brother and Fellow Chriſtian. *Envy* is a diveliſh temper of Spirit, by which one mans happineſs becomes another mans miſery: One mans health another mans ſickneſs. It was a very proper queſtion which was once asked *a pale envivous* Man, *Are you ſick, or is your Neighbour well?* Where *Envy* Rules, one mans Proſperity is another mans Adverſity. The envious man, how rich ſoever he is, is undone by the

Riches of another man. The Apoſtle having Admoniſht them of thoſe two great Enemies to Brotherly Love in the Concluſion of that Chapter; In this he preſcribes ſome general Rules which tend exceedingly to the healing of diviſions, and the continuance and promotion of Love amongſt Chriſtians. I have made choyce of the firſt, which is a direction how Chriſtians, who are themſelves inoffenſive, ſhould treat them that offend. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, yee that are Spiritual reſtore ſuch a one with the Spirit of meekneſs, conſidering thy ſelf leſt thou alſo be tempted.*

I will not ſpend much time in the explication of the terms in the Text. I ſuppoſe I ſhall not need to tell you what it is to be taken in a fault: I wiſh we all knew as well what it is to have a Spirit of Meekneſs: and I wiſh we all knew as well what it is to reſtore our Brother with ſuch a Spirit. A fault is any thing that

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a man does which is againſt the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, or againſt any Law of God. He is guilty of a fault who commits any known ſin to the prejudice of his own ſoul, by which it is polluted and made obnoxious to Gods wrath and diſpleaſure. And he is guilty of a fault likewiſe who breaks the Peace and Unity of the Church by Schiſm and cauſeleſs Separation. I intend my diſcourſe ſhall chiefly relate to the latter: The reſtor- of them to the Communion of the Church who have ſeparated from it. The Apoſtle ſpeaks at large, concerning any fault, but in regard the *Galatians* had been ſeduced by falſe Apoſtles, and had been taught falſe Doctrine, we have no reaſon but to think that he intended this fault as well, if not rather than any other. And this is the fault in which men are moſt apt to be taken unawares. The *Works of the Fleſh* which the Apoſtle mentions are ſo *manifeſt*, Adultery, Fornication, *&c.* That men are

not apt to be taken with them unawares, as he is with this. A man is more eaſily led into errors of Judgment than he is into errors of practice, eſpecially conſidering how eaſily the Scriptures may be wreſted and miſunderſtood, and that there hath been in every age *Falſe Prophets* and *Falſe Teachers*, and *many following their Pernitious wayes*. Whatſoever the fault is in which our fellow Chriſtian is overtaken, he is to be reſtored by thoſe that are Spiritual. But the next queſtion is, who they are?

By the word *Spiritual*, I conceive we are to underſtand all ſuch as are reformed from the deeds of the Fleſh, and whoſe lives do ſhew forth the fruits of the Spirit, according to what the Apoſtle mentions in the former Chapter. I know there is another interpretation given of the Word πνευματικοὶ, which I ſhall have afterwards occaſion to take ſome notice of; but conſidering the context, how the Apoſtle in the foregoing Chapter,

ter, ver. 13. required that the *Galatians* ſhould by *Love ſerve one another*, and in the Concluſion of the Chapter immediately before my Text, that they ſhould not *Provoke one another*, nor *envy one another*: And in the words next to my Text, that they ſhould bear one anothers burthens; I know not why by *Spiritual*, we ſhould not underſtand every good man in whom the fruits of the Spirit do appear.

Reſtore: The word καταρτίζω ſignifies properly to *ſet a bone that is broken, or out of joynt*. The bonds of Chriſtian Love are very ſtrong, and it is by them that we are knit together like joynts incloſed with nerves and ſinews: and when one diſſents, and breaks Communion, it is or ſhould be, like a bone broken or out of joynt, at which the reſt of the members ſhould be deeply concerned. Thus we may conſider the meaning of the word, if by being taken in a fault, we underſtand the fault of ſeparating from

from the Publick Communion of the Church. which as I mentioned, is a very proper ſenſe of the words.

In the Spirit of Meekneſs. It is very neceſſary that we ſhould underſtand what the Spirit of Meekneſs is, that we may rejoyce and be thankful if we have it, and earneſtly ſtrive, and pray to God for it if we have it not. It may beſt be known by its oppoſites.

1. Meekneſs is oppoſite to turbulent paſſion, that which doth exceedingly diſorder both the ſoul and body where it is prevalent. The Apoſtle therefore joyns *a meek and a quiet Spirit* together, 1 *Pet.* 3.4. He that takes another in a fault, and is ſo rufled and diſcompoſed, that he knows not how to ſpeak calmly to him, in order to the reſtoring of him, wants a Spirit of Meekneſs.

2. A meek Spirit is oppoſite to a revengful Spirit. This made *Moſes* ſo famed for the meekeſt man in all the Earth, *Numb.* 12. Becauſe when Aaron

Aaron *and* Miriam *ſpake againſt him and ſaid, Hath the Lord only ſpoken by* Moſes, *hath he not alſo ſpoken by us*? He was not moved to paſſion, nor did he ſeek revenge. And therefore it is ſaid, ver. 3. Moſes *was meek above all men which were upon the face of the Earth.*

3. A Meek Spirit is oppoſite to a rigorous Spirit. When a man deſires the Puniſhment, rather than the Reformation of him that is taken in a fault, which is the end of Puniſhment, ſuch a man hath not a Spirit of Meekneſs. The Apoſtle ſaith to the *Corinthians*, 1 *Epiſt.* chap. 4. ver. 21. *Shall I come unto you with a Rod, or with a Spirit of Meekneſs?* Where the Spirit of Meekneſs is oppoſed to the Rod, which ſignifies ſeverity.

4. A Spirit of Meekneſs is oppoſed to a Spirit of reviling and ſpeaking evil. Meekneſs bridles the Tongue. Our Saviour was famed for this Spirit, becauſe *he was dumb and opened not his mouth.* He was ſilent, and anſwered

red not a word, when, to be ſure, there were no provocations which could be compared to his. Or if it doth not ſhut up the tongue, yet it commands a ſoft and gentle ſpeech, which is exceedingly obliging to the offending perſon. Thus *Lot* ſhewed his Meekneſs to the men of *Sodom*, when they preſſed upon him, and would have offered violence to the Angels that were his Gueſts, *I pray you Brethren do not ſo wickedly*, *Gen.* 19. 7. A taunting reproaching tongue, is as contrary to a Spirit of Meekneſs, and as contrary to a Chriſtian Spirit, as any thing can be; as will appear more in the ſequel of my diſcourſe.

The words being thus explained, I proceed to that which is principally contained in them. They give us a direction how we ſhould treat our Brother when he hath done amiſs. We muſt reſtore him: we muſt uſe our utmoſt endeavours to ſet him right again, and this cannot be done any other

other way, ſo well as by a Spirit of Meekneſs: Or, to be ſure, this muſt be the firſt way that muſt be uſed with him.

I have thought fit to diſcourſe on this Subject as that which is very neceſſary, and very ſeaſonable: All that we can do being little enough to allay thoſe Unchriſtian heats which are amongſt us, and which are blown into a Flame upon every occaſion. There is nothing more requiſite at this time, than that we ſhould treat thoſe that have been taken in a fault with a Spirit of Meekneſs, and yet there are Complaints as if men were farther from it now, if poſſible, than they have been heretofore. The rage and fury of ſome men, and their deſire to ruine all that have done amiſs, is ſuch, that he who ſpeaks but a Meek word concerning them, is ſuppoſed to be guilty of the ſame fault himſelf. Many men are ſo far from obſerving this Rule and Precept of Chriſtianity: reſtoring him that is

taken

taken in a fault with a Spirit of Meekneſs, that they account a Spirit of Meekneſs to be the greateſt fault of all. It would be enough (if ſome might be judges) to prove a man guilty, if he does not preſently fly in the face of him that hath done amiſs. As if the Character which our Saviour gave of a Diſciple, were to be blotted out, and another quite contrary were to be placed in the room of it: That it ſhould be no longer, *By this ſhall all men know that yee are my Deſciples if yee love one another.* But, by this ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples if ye hate and revile one another, and ſpeak evil one of another. The world is come to that paſs now, that it requires more than ordinary courage in a Miniſter if he dares commend a Spirit of Meekneſs. But I will adventure to do it, and to tell you the reaſon of it too, which may exceedingly aggravate my crime. There is a grievous complaint made by ſome, who have diſſented from the

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Church, that upon their return to it, they do not meet with that Chriſtian Spirit by which they ſhould be encouraged to have Communion with us, and to continue it; but with Revilings and Affronts to the great grief and diſcompoſure of their Spirits in the Houſe of God.

This Text tells them, that Chriſtianity requires men to be of another Spirit, and ſuch perſons, and all others that have been overtaken in faults ought to be otherwiſe treated. I ſhall therefore recommend a Spirit of meekneſs to you from the conſideration of theſe five things.

I. From the conſideration of what it is in it ſelf. It is a moſt ſweet, pleaſant and delightful temper of mind. A meek man is alwayes at quiet in himſelf. When other men are almoſt conſumed by the heat and rage of their own paſſions: *Wrath Kills the fooliſh man.* He is like *Jonah* under his *Gourd*, cool and in very good

good temper. When other men are like the *Iſraelites* in the Wilderneſs, fretting and vexing themſelves, becauſe every thing doth not happen as they would have it: wrangling with God, and diſtruſting his Providence, as if he did not know how to provide for men in their ſtreights, or how to deliver them from their fears, and are therefore complaining againſt their Governours; he is like an *Iſraelite* in the *Land of Promiſe*: he hath *Milk and Honey* flowing in the temper of his own mind. A meek Spirit doth not only keep men from hurt, but it gives them the enjoyment of all that is good. There are a great many in the World who have great plenty of the *good things* of this Life, but they enjoy no good at all by them, becauſe of the uneaſineſs of their own peeviſh fretfull Spirits. The ſewerneſs of their own tempers takes away the ſweetneſs of all that they do poſſeſs, but a meek Spirit gives a man all that is pleaſant from what he enjoyes.

joyes. He patiently bears Croſſes, and thankfuly receives Comforts. In this ſenſe that which our Saviour ſaid is very true, *Bleſſed are the meek, for they ſhall inherit the Earth.* They enjoy the good things of this life, and have the greateſt Sweetneſs that they afford, and may expect the longeſt Continuance of them. I might ſhew likewiſe, that it is the moſt obliging Temper, and therefore doth exceedingly conduce to the good and Comfort of mens lives, whilſt they are in this World. But,

II. As it is a Temper very pleaſant in it ſelf, ſo it is highly acceptable to God, and gives us a good aſſurance of his Love and Favour: *A meek and quiet Spirit is to God of great price,* 1 *Pet.* 3. 4. And it muſt needs be ſo, for it is like unto God himſelf. *Fury is not in me, ſaith the Lord.* In this as well as in other vertues, we are *Followers of God as dear Children. The Lord is ſlow to anger,* and ſo is

the meek man: When he is provoked, *He doth not willingly afflict nor grieve the Children of Men.* Men may pretend to what they pleaſe, but he that delights to vex or torment him that is taken in a fault, is far from being *Merciful as his Heavenly Father is Merciful.* God draws offenders to him *by the cords of a man, and by the bonds of Love.* The greateſt offenders, who are not hardned and incorrigeable, are dealt tenderly with. God ſaith, *Let us reaſon together*, to thoſe whoſe ſins were *as Scarlet and as Crimſon.* His Language to great ſinners is by meek Expoſtulations, *Why will ye die? &c.* And if God be ſo favourable and ſo deſirous that thoſe who have offended him ſhould be reformed and not puniſhed, what ſtrange Tempers are they of whom nothing will ſatisfy but Rigour and Severity.

We find likewiſe, how highly God values a Meek Spirit, by the great Love that he ſhews to thoſe that are of that temper. He doth ſeverely

puniſh

puniſh thoſe, who can be ſo baſe and diſingenuous, as to offer any Affront or injury to a meek man. When *Miriam* and *Aaron* ſpake againſt *Moſes*, *Num.* 12. God was exceedingly offended at them, for but opening their lips againſt him. *He ſaid unto them, Why are ye not afraid to ſpeak againſt my Servant* Moſes? *And the anger of the Lord was kindled againſt them, and he departed*, ver. 8, 9. And by what follows it appears, that he went away in an anger; for *Miriam* was ſtruck with a *Leproſie*, and *Aaron* ſeeing it, made haſt to lament for what he had done, and with an humble ſubmiſſion to *Moſes*, to ask forgiveneſs. Aaron *ſaid unto* Moſes, *alas, my Lord; I beſeech thee lay not the ſin upon us wherein we have done fooliſhly, and wherein we have ſinned*, ver. 11. And might, for all that, have ſuffered very ſeverely, if the Meek man whom he ſpake againſt, had not ſpoken to God for them. Nay, though *Moſes cried unto the Lord*, yet *Miriam* (who

probably was the firſt in the fault, and inſtigated *Aaron* to it, or was more peremptory in her reproofes) was ſhut up ſeven dayes, that ſhe might ſpend that time, in conſidering what it is to ſpeak againſt a Meek man.

It appears likewiſe, how great an Eſteem God hath for a Spirit of Meekneſs, by the many promiſes which he hath made to Meek men in his word. *The meek will he guide in judgment; and the Meek will he teach his way. The Meek ſhall be hid in the day of the Lords Wrath*, as in Pſal. 25. 9. *Zeph.* 2. 3. and inumerable other places in the Scriptures.

Meekneſs was the Temper of our Bleſſed Saviour, and it was his command that his Diſciples ſhould follow his example in it. *Learn of me for I am Meek and lowly.* A furious man is no true Diſciple of Chriſt. He is a Scholar that will not learn of his Maſter. Our Saviours Meekneſs was ſuch, that it occaſioned Fury in his enemies, becauſe they could find

find no *evil* in his words or actions· was ſo far from reviling any, or uſing reproachful Expreſſions, that *when he was reviled, he reviled not again.* If any were taken in a fault, he was not preſently for puniſhing them, but but by Meekneſs and Kindneſs reforming of them. The Scribes and Phariſees *John* 8. 3. *Brought him a Woman that was taken in Adultery, in the very Act.* She was taken in a fault indeed. *Moſes in the Law,* ſaid they, *commanded that ſuch ſhould be ſtoned, but what ſayeſt thou? This they ſaid tempting him, that they might have to accuſe him.* If he had abſolved her, they would have accuſed him of violating the Law of *Moſes.* If he had condemned her, he would then ſeem to annul the very purpoſe of his Coming, which was to *call ſinners to Repentance,* and not to inflict temporal Puniſhments.

In this tranſaction we do not only find the Wiſdom of our Saviour, in propounding that to them, which made

their guilty Conſciences turn them all away, but his Meekneſs to the woman that was taken in the fault. *He ſaid to her; Woman where are thoſe thine accuſers? hath no man condemned thee? Shee ſaid, no man, Lord. He ſaid to her, Neither do I condemn thee: Go, and ſin no more:* We are not to think, that our Saviour ſaid this, that he might ſo much as extenuate the Fault that ſhe was taken in, but to ſhew that he would not take upon him to be a temporal Judge, who came to be a Spiritual and Merciful Saviour. He did not ſo much as give her a reproachful word, but bad her *Go, and ſin no more.* He that delights to revile and reproach, to condemn and puniſh; one would think that of all Religions in the world he were no Chriſtian, nor ever heard who Chriſt was, or what he required of his Followers. The Apoſtle had no ſtronger Argument to uſe to the *Corinthians* than this was, 2 Cor. 10. 1. *Now I* Paul *beſeech you by the Meekneſs and Gentleneſs of Chriſt.*

III. A Spirit of Meekneſs tends to a publick good, both of Church and State. There are two things of abſolute neceſſity, for the Eſtabliſhment of our Peace and Proſperity. That the People ſhould have a Spirit of Submiſſion towards their Governours, and a Spirit of Meekneſs one towards another. My great deſign is to perſwade thoſe, that are not faulty as to the firſt, but are of undoubted Loyalty to the King, that they would not be failing as to the ſecond. They are both very great Duties, and ſuch as the Goſpel doth very ſtrictly require of all that profeſs Chriſtianity. The Apoſtle joyns them together, and it would be happy for the Nation, if there were no man that put them aſunder, *Tit.* 3. 1. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to Principalities, and Powers, to Obey Magiſtrates* And ver. 2. *To ſpeak evil of no man, to be no Brawlers, but Gentle, ſhewing all Meekneſs unto all men.* The Apo-

ſtle ſuppoſeth, that there might be great occaſion to provoke them to Railing and Evill ſpeaking, but he tells them they muſt not give way to Paſſion, although their Zeal for their Religion might prompt them to it.

My deſign is to ſpeak chiefly of the Neceſſity of this temper, as conducing to the Churches Peace and Unity, which certainly men do not conſider, whatever they pretend, when they exaſperate others by Reviling and Evill ſpeaking. We have been a great while *biting and devouring one another* (and by that meanes we have made ſport for them that hope to devour us all;) inſomuch that it is Gods great Mercy that we are not *Conſumed one of another.* There is a great opportunity given to us, of promoting the Churches Peace and Unity, if an Unchriſtian temper of Spirit doth not hinder it. Many that have diſſented are conſtrained, by the execution of Laws, to ſerve God with us. I heartily wiſh, that we may con-

conſtrain them another way; ſuch a way, I mean, as Chriſt *Conſtraineth us*, and that is by his *Love* towards us.

The great thing which we ought earneſtly to endeavour and *Pray, for* is *the Peace of Jeruſalem*, that our eyes may *ſee her a quiet Habitation*, and that we may all joyn together in Love and Unity; but this can never be, if we are not of peaceable Spirits, or as the Apoſtle ſaith, of meek and quiet Spirits, to them that are now come among us. We read that when *Solomon* built his Temple, *There was neither Hammer, nor Axe, nor any Tool of Iron, heard in the Houſe, whilſt it was in building.* It had no doubt a typical Signification to ſhew, that there muſt be no Jarres or Contentions amongſt the Worſhippers of God, which are as the knocking of Iron Inſtruments, and much more unpleaſant than they can be. As there was that care taken in the building of the houſe of God, ſo I wiſh we may

may take a care alluding to it, in our repairing of the unhappy Breaches of the Church of God; and that we may all be as thoſe Workmen who helpt on with the building, but made no noyſe.

Reproaching and ſpeaking Evil of men, whatever their faults have been, is not the way to bring them into the Churches Communion, but to make them ſhun and avoid it. I ſhould exceedingly wonder, if I ſhould hear one ſay, that he hath been in company with Diſſenters, and that he took occaſion to tell them what they are: That he treated them with ſuch reproachful Titles, as the Devil and his Emiſſaries hath ſent out of other Nations, to ſet Proteſtants at variance one againſt another. And now that he hath done this, he hopes it will be a means to bring them to Church, and that he and they ſhall all joyn together, in lifting up their hearts to God in the uſe of the publick Prayers of the Church: He hopes now that they

they ſhall come together to the Bleſſed Sacrament of the Lords Supper.

If we love the Church, we will heartily endeavour to encreaſe her Members, and if we pretend to that, and yet revile thoſe who have diſſented, we are Fools and contradict our ſelves. We ſhould do very well to learn Wiſdom from an Enemy. If a *Jeſuite* ſhould ſee any of us in their places of publick Worſhip, how kindly ſhould we be treated by them, in hopes that they might bring us over to the Church of *Rome*. If we had of late gone to the Conventicles of *Anabaptiſts*, or any other Sectaries, how gladly would they have made room for us, and treated us with all poſſible kindneſs, in hopes that we would be in Love with their Party: And ſhall we have leſs regard for that Church whereof we are Members, which is admired by all Learned men of the Reformed Religion, as the beſt conſtituted Church in the world?

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If the preſent Execution of Laws drive thoſe that have diſſented into our boſoms to be embraced by us, and not upon the *Swords* and *Spears* of reproachful Tongues, we have great cauſe to hope that they will be ſatisfied of the great Neceſſity, and likewiſe of the great Benefit of a hearty and ſincere Compliance. I will conclude this particular, with the Apoſtles importunate Requeſt to the *Epheſians*, Chap. 4. v. 1, 2, 3. *I beſeech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with long ſuffering, forbearing one another in Love. Endeavouring to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace.*

IV. As a Spirit of Meekneſs tends to a General good, ſo likewiſe to our own Particular good and Benefit. It is a great ſatisfaction to us, if we are well aſſured, that we are of ſuch a Temper of mind, as becomes our Profeſſion, and which is not only pleaſant in it ſelf, but acceptable to God, and

and ſerviceable to his Church. It is an argument that we are ſuch perſons as we ought to be: Particularly.

1. It a great argument of true Piety and Holineſs. That we fear God, and are truly and ſincerely Religious. The Apoſtle joynes Meekneſs and the Fear of God together, 1 Pet. 3. 15. *But Sanctifie the Lord God in your hearts, And be ready alwayes to give an anſwer to every man that asketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with Meekneſs and Fear.* The Apoſtle did not mean, that they ſhould fear them that ſhould call them to Queſtion, but that they ſhould only ſhew Meekneſs towards them: and that there ſhould be in them that fear of God, which ſhould keep them from the fear of Men.

The Apoſtle ſaith, *Ye that are Spiritual*, &c. Intimating that Meekneſs is to be expected from ſuch. If we are not Meek, it may be ſuſpected that we are not Spiritual. This

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is one of the *fruits of the Spirit*, mentioned in the foregoing Chapter, v. 22. *The fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-ſuffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs.*

A Spirit of Meekneſs is a great evidence that we are good Chriſtians, and that our Religion hath tempered our minds. 'Tis that (as I have already ſhew'd) which our Saviour requires of all that are his Diſciples; And if we read the Epiſtles of the Apoſtles, we may conclude that there was nothing which they did with more ardent Zeal, and continued fervency contend for, (not only for the promoting of Chriſtianity in the World, but) as that which was a good Evidence of mens being in a Religious State. *Put on therefore (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of Mercies, Kindneſs, Humbleneſs of mind, Meekneſs, Long-ſuffering, Col.* 3. 12. The Apoſtle plainly ſhews, that thoſe who are highly valued of God, ſhould

ſhould ſhew a Spirit of Meekneſs towards men.

Beſides, If we do not treat our Brother with a Spirit of Meekneſs, but with biting Scoffs and Revilings, we are not good men, for our Carriage towards them contradicts our Prayers to God. We pray, that God *Would lead into the way of Truth all ſuch as have erred, and are deceived.* We pray that *all who profeſs and call themſelves Chriſtians, may be led into the way of Truth, and hold the Faith, in Unity of Spirit, and in the bond of Peace.* And if we treat thoſe ill that have erred, and are returned to the Church (where 'tis to be hoped they will be convinced of their Errors:) It is a ſign that we never were devout in thoſe prayers, for we ſeem diſcontented that God hath heard them.

I heartily wiſh that thoſe men, who are ſo apt to reviling, would conſider what the Apoſtle ſaith. *Every one muſt give an account of himſelf to God,*

God; and consider how impossible it is, that they can be justifyed, when they shall appear before that God, who will judge men according to the Gospel; which as I have shewed doth so strictly require *All Meekness towards all men.* Surely there is not a man, that ever read the Comands of Christ, who can think that he shall come off well at the great *Tribunal*, if he can only say, "Lord I was so "Zealous for the Church, that I ha- "ted all that seperated from it; I could "not see them, but my Spirit was in- "censed. I could not speak to them "but with provoking Expressions *&c.* This plea might be of great force, if God would make mens Passions to be the rule of Judging, and not his Word, which requires that we *do good to all*, that we love our Enemies, and that we should make it our business to *convert sinners from the errours of their wayes.*

But on the contrary, If a man can say, 'Lord I have been afflicted for thy 'Church

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'Church, to ſee the Rents and Diviſi-
'ons which have been amongſt Chri-
'ſtians. It hath greived me to ſee
'how little men have regarded *Jeruſa-*
'*lems* peace, and how much they have
'indulged their unreaſonable and cauſe-
'leſs Prejudices; I have heartily pray-
'ed to thee to bring them into the
'way of Truth. I have endeavoured
'to convince them of their miſtakes,
'and to perſwade them, with all ex-
'preſſions of Meekneſs and Love, that
'they would conſider the Diſho-
'nour that hath redounded to thy
'Great Name, and to the profeſſion
'of the Holy Religion of Chriſtiani-
'ty: And when I ſaw that they Return-
'ed, my heart rejoyced, and my Arms
'Embraced them; and I was glad when
'I could go with them into Thy
'Houſe, or meet them there.

This is the right Temper of a Chriſtian, and this is the Perſon that will be found fit to *ſit with Chriſt*, when he ſhall Judge the World. A Spirit of Meekneſs is a good evidence of a

ſincere Chriſtian, and that he ſhall come off with Triumph when the *Lamb* ſhall appear *ſitting upon the Throne.*

One would think that what our Saviour ſaid in his Sermon upon the Mount, *Mat.* 5. 21, 22. ſhould make all men afraid of Reviling their Brother, as they love their own Souls, and value their Eternal welfare. He tells them, that they who are guilty of it are Murderers, and ſhall be puniſhed as ſuch (and I am ſure the Houſe of God is a very unfit place for men to commit Murder in) if their timely Repentance, which is a change in them to a better temper, doth not prevent it. *Ye have heard that it hath been ſaid by them of old times, Thou ſhalt not Kill; and whoſoever ſhall Kill, ſhall be in danger of the Judgment: But I ſay unto you, that whoſoever ſhall be angry with his Brother without a Cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the Judgment; and whoſoever ſhall ſay unto his Brother,* Racha, *ſhall be in*

in danger of the Council; and whoſoever ſhall ſay, Thou Fool, *ſhall be in danger of Hell Fire.* Our Saviour ſpake to them who thought that the ſixth Commandment could not be broken, unleſs a man did actually commit Murder, and therefore he Explaines it, by telling them, that men might be Murderers in their Hearts, though they were not ſo with their Hands: And that thoſe who are of Malitious and Reproachful Spirits, ſhould be puniſhed as ſuch. He gives an account of it with alluſion to the ſeveral degrees of Puniſhments amongſt the *Jewes*, whereof the leaſt was Death. *Whoſoever ſhall be Angry with his Brother without a Cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the Judgment*: that is, whoſoever ſhall be Offended at his Brother, more from his Aptneſs to take Offence, than from any Cauſe given to him; or ſhall not moderate his Paſſion with a proportionable reſpect to the nature of the Offence, ſhall have that Puniſhment in another ſtate,

which is anſwerable to that which the *Jews* called Capital: He hath made himſelf thereby liable to Eternal Death in another State. *And whoſoever ſhall ſay to his Brother*, Racha, that is, worthleſs empty Fellow; that ſhall vilifie him as mean and inconſiderable, *ſhall be in danger of the Council*, of being condemned to ſuffer a greater puniſhment than an ordinary Death; that was to be Stoned to death, which was the ſentence of the *Sanhedrim*: Meaning, that he who uſed Reproachful Expreſſions, ſhould have a greater puniſhment than he who did not vent his paſſion in Opprobrious Language. *But, whoſoever ſhall ſay*, Thou Fool, *ſhall be in danger of Hell Fire*, which we are not to underſtand, as if the puniſhments afore-mentioned were any whit leſs than the puniſhment of Hell Fire; but as ſignifying a greater degree of Puniſhment, or, I may ſay, the Fire made hotter: It alludes to the burning in the Valley of *Hinnom*, which was

was a puniſhment far greater than the other two (where Children were put into Brazen Veſſels, ſet over the fire till they were Scalded to death;) and therefore ſignifies, that he who doth not only uſe undervaluing Expreſſions, by repreſenting his Brother as weak and empty-headed, but proceeds to the higheſt degree of Railing, which is expreſt by ſaying to him *Thou Fool*, ſhall be in danger of exceeding great puniſhment in the place of Torments.

I was the more willing to give an Account of this place, according to the Opinion of the beſt Expoſitors; not only becauſe there are many who do not Underſtand it, but becauſe there are more who do not Conſider it; and becauſe it is very much to my preſent purpoſe. If a man would know what his condition is, and what it is like to be, let him Examine the Temper of his Mind, whether Religion hath ſubdued his Paſſion, and keeps his Tongue

from venting it. Bad Words do as well diſcover a bad Man as bad Actions, what ever men may pretend to. Let men that are apt to revile, conſider what St. *James* ſaith, and look to themſelves, chap. 1. v. 26. *If any man amongſt you ſeem to be Religious, and bridleth not his Tongue, but deceiveth his own Heart, that mans Religion is vain.* Surely then they are very far from being Religious, who do not bridle their Tongues in that Houſe which is appointed for Religion, and the Worſhip of God.

And let not men think, that any Zeal for Religion, or any Devotion which they ſhew in the Houſe of God, will avail them, if they are void of a Chriſtian-Spirit towards their Brethren. It is a ſtrange thing, that men ſhould think that their praying to God can be acceptable, eſpecially at that time when they have reviled their Brother. Nor let men think, that they ſhall only be called to account, for what they have been towards

wards God: For we find in the Goſpel, that when the great day of Judgment is ſpoken of, the tranſactions of it which are mentioned, do chiefly relate to what we are towards one another; for fear (as we may ſuppoſe) that men ſhould think, that a dread and reverence of God ſhould availe them, though they are of evil Spirits towards their Brethren. A Spirit of Meekneſs is a good argument of Piety; that we are in the favour of God, and ſhall be for ever Happy in another World,

2. A Spirit of Meekneſs is an Argument of Wiſdom. We never hear any ſay, that they have been in company with men whom they have heard Reviling and reproaching other men, and therefore they believe them to be Wiſe men: But on the Contrary, all men know that ſuch are very weak men; men that are very unfit to Manage any affairs of concern, becauſe they can not Manage themſelves. We find that every Fool & Idiot can give ill

Language, if he can but ſpeak: But as *Solomon* ſaith, *The words of a wiſe man are heard in quiet*, *Eccleſ.*9. v.7. He is a Wiſe man who will not be provoked to Paſſion, but can give a mild reply to him that is Furious and Provoking.

It is exceedingly to be lamented, that thoſe who call themſelves the Diſciples and Followers of the *Meek* Jeſus, ſhould come ſo far ſhort as they do, of the Meekneſs of many Heathens whom we read of, for which they were very deſervedly accounted Wiſe men. We read of one, who when he was baſely Reproached and falſly Accuſed, took no other notice of it, but only to ſay, *Bene loqui non didicit.* He told thoſe that were with him; that he perceived *The man had not learnt to give Good Words.* Of another, who was ſo affronted by his Opprobrious Adverſary, that he followed him to his own houſe all the way Railing at him; But the Meek man did exceedingly Pity him; and becauſe it was in the Dark, he commanded

manded his Servant to take a Candle and Lanthorn, and light the man back to his own houſe. We read of another, whoſe Provocation was greater: It was not enough for his Enemy to fill his Ears with baſe Language, but he gave him a great ſtroke upon the Head: At which the abuſed Perſon would not be moved to Paſſion and Revenge, but only made a reply to this purpoſe, *What an ill thing it is, that when men go abroad, they forget to put on a Helmet to defend their Heads.* Theſe were Wiſe men, of whom Hiſtory hath made mention, that their Wiſdom might be recorded for the honour of their Memories, and the Examples of others, that they might have ſuch a Spirit of Meekneſs, for which theſe were Eminent.

I know there are ſome men who ſeem to be Meek men, and are not: Such as can reſtrain their Paſſions, with a reſolution to ſtudy a full Revenge afterwards for any Injury that

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is done to them; and in the mean while, they can give very ſmooth words: But theſe are men in whom there is Deviliſh Policy, and not that Wiſdom which I am ſpeaking of; nor is their Temper a Spirit of Meekneſs, by which they lay aſide Prejudice and Revenge as God requires, but a moſt deſperate and Deviliſh Spirit, far more miſchievous than that which vents it ſelf by a preſent Rage and Fury. This is Wiſdom (if I may give it ſo good a name) which is from beneath, but the Spirit of Meekneſs is an argument of that *Wiſdom which is from above, which is firſt pure and then peaceable*; That Wiſdom which I may call Chriſtian Policy, by which Chriſtianity was exceedingly promoted in the firſt Ages of it, and which would tend exceedingly to the advantage of the Church of Chriſt amongſt us. That Wiſdom which the Apoſtle exhorted to for the bringing in of Proſelites, Coloſ. 4. 5. *Walk in Wiſdom towards them*

them that are without; Redeeming the time. His meaning (according to the ſence of ſome good Expoſitors) is, that they ſhould be circumſpect, and carry themſelves ſo, as to take all opportunities to render Chriſtianity lovely and amiable to thoſe who were prejudiced againſt it. And becauſe the Tongue is an unruly member, which betrayes folly and weakneſs, he adds, ver. 6. *Let your ſpeech be alwayes with grace, ſeaſoned with Salt* pleaſant and not unſavory, *that ye may know how to anſwer every man.* By which we may obſerve, that good words are not only tending to the good of others, but they ſhew a man that ſpeaks them to be a Wiſe man. Remarkable likewiſe is that Expreſſion of St. *James*, Chap. 3. v. 13. *Whoſo is a Wiſe man and endued with Knowledge amongſt you? Let him ſhew out of a good Converſation, his works with Meekneſs of Wiſdom.* The Apoſtle had before been ſhewing what a miſcheivous member the Tongue is, and what an Unchriſtian

chriſtian thing it is, that men ſhould Villify and Reproach their Brethren with it, thoſe eſpecially that profeſs Religion; that God ſhould be bleſſed, and men ſhould be curſed with the ſame Tongue, which is the meaning of the Apoſtle, ver. 9. *Therewith bleſs we God even the Father, and therewith curſe we men, which are made after the ſimilitude of God.* That curſing of men is interpreted to be railing againſt them, and reviling of them. To avoid this, there muſt be Meekneſs of Wiſdom; that Wiſdom which hath Meekneſs accompanying of it.

3. It is an Argument of Humility, and that a man hath a great ſenſe of his own Failings and Infirmities. He that is acquainted with himſelf, and conſiders what his own faults have been, can not be very apt to break out into a Rage and Paſſion, becauſe of the faults of other men. It is impoſſible that any man can take another in a fault, ſo often as he may take him-

himſelf. If men would look back and conſider what they have done amiſs themſelves, it would give a check to their ill-natured paſſions towards others.

This was the Apoſtles Argument which he would have *Titus* uſe to them that were very mindful of other mens faults but very forgetful of their own. In the forementioned place, *Tit.* 3. 2. he requires them *To ſpeak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, ſhewing all Meekneſs unto all men,* and at v. 3. he tells them, that their own faults ſhould be a Motive to it. *For we our ſelves alſo were ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived, ſerving divers Luſts and Pleaſures, living in Malice and Envy, hateful, and hating one another.* It may ſeem very ſtrange, that men who had been guilty of ſo many faults, ſhould be apt to ſpeak evil and to brawl againſt others. And yet this the baſe nature of man is very prone and apt to, which makes ſuch an exhortation neceſſary. As

As our Saviour ſaid to thoſe that accuſed the Woman of Adultery. *He that is without ſin, let him caſt the firſt ſtone.* So I may ſay when a man is taken in a fault, let him that is without faults lay aſide a Spirit of Meekneſs, and bite and devour him.

It were well if every one, (eſpecially thoſe that want a Spirit of Meekneſs) had a *Phylacterie* with the Apoſtles words written upon it. *In many things we offend all,* becauſe it would make men kind and gentle to their Brother offender. It might make Chriſtian acquaintance to ſhew their love one towards another, by being kind and gentle Monitors of each others faults. I know very well, that men are apt to aggravate the faults of others, and to extenuate their own; or otherwiſe he that takes another in a fault, would preſently conſider that it becomes him to be Gentle and Meek, becauſe if he hath not been guilty of the ſame offence, yet he may have been guilty of many others, which have

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tended as much to the diſhonour of God, and prejudice of the Church, as this which his Brother is taken in.

Beſides the faults that are paſt, we know not what may yet be to come. I had not need to revile my Brother to day, who may be taken in a greater fault to morrow; but conſidering my own aptneſs to offend, tell him of his fault with ſuch a Spirit of Meekneſs, as I would have uſed towards me. This is the Apoſtles Argument in the Text, and it is, or ſhould be, a very cogent one. *Conſidering thy ſelf, leſt thou alſo be tempted.* We are diſturbed at the intollerable, and inexpreſſible miſcheifs of Separation: and the Conſideration of them is apt to exaſperate one man againſt another. It is a grievous Scandal to the Proteſtant Religion all over the world. But yet it concerns us to ſhew a Spirit of Meekneſs towards them that have Separated, *Conſidering our ſelves leſt we alſo be tempted. Peter* thought

that

that he could dye rather than deny his Maſter, but temptations prevailed upon him.

There are a great many, who think that nothing can make them fly from their Principles, but yet they know not how far the fiery Tryal on one hand, and Allurements on the other may prevail, by which they may diſhonour their profeſſion, and bring a great ſcandal to their Religion. It is given as a Reaſon why God deals gently with us: *He remembreth that we are but Fleſh, and a Wind that paſſeth away*; and I am ſure our weakneſs, and Inſtability ſhould be a great reaſon, why we ſhould treat our Brother meekly.

V. We muſt reſtore our Brother with a Spirit of Meekneſs, that we may avoid occaſions of offence. A Spirit of Bitternes and Reviling is in this reſpect of more dangerous Conſequence, than men are uſually aware of. Thoſe that gratify their Paſſions may

may pleaſe themſelves, but they do exceedingly diſpleaſe others.

1. It is a great Offence to our Governours, to whom only it belongs to puniſh thoſe who are taken in a Fault. The civil Magiſtrate hath the Sword in his Hand, and therefore it doth not become the People to have Swords in their Mouths: I mean ſharp and cutting Reproaches. If the common People will undertake to Arraign, Accuſe, and Condemn men for their Faults; the queſtion may be asked them, which the *Hebrew* man askt *Moſes*, *Exod.* 2. 14. *Who made thee a Ruler and a Judge?* We all know that Reviling is the next ſtep to Rebellion and Confuſion; eſpecially when it is occaſioned by that which is of publick concern, for then it is not ſo properly one man that reviles another, as one Party reviles another. If we ſhew a Spirit of Hatred againſt thoſe that have been of a different Opinion, we ſhall make them think long for an opportunity to be revenged

becauſe they ſee no hopes that they can be reconciled. And this muſt needs be a very great offence to the Magiſtrate, to whom it belongs to diſcountenance and oppoſe all occaſions of Jarres and Conteſts, as he values his own and the Kingdomes ſafety.

It hath alwayes been the great care of thoſe whom God hath ſet upon the Throne, to keep their Subjects from exaſperating one another by opprobrious Names, eſpecially when there hath been Conteſts about Religion, which are of moſt dangerous conſequence to the Government. Queen *Elizabeth*, taking notice of this in her Reign, forbids it as that which ſhe called the *looſening of Charity which is the knot of all Chriſtian Society*; and commanded that all her Subjects ſhould *forbear all vain contentions*, and that they ſhould not uſe *in deſpite or rebuke of any theſe convitious Words*, Papiſt *or* Heretick, Schiſmatick *or* Sacramentarian. It was likewiſe the Command of King *James*, that there ſhould be

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no railing againſt the Perſons of Papiſts or Puritans.

In the Reign of Our late Soveraign of Bleſſed Memory (who might himſelf be called a Spirit of Meekneſs) we know very well that there were opprobrious Names which helpt to enrage one Party againſt another, till the King and many thouſands of his Subjects were deſtroyed.

Our dread Soveraign, ſo ſoon as God reſtored him to his Throne, did not only paſs an Act of Oblivion, that he might pardon all Offences paſt, but by ſeveral Declarations, and Charges given to his Judges, hath comanded that there ſhould not be ſo much as any terms of Diſtinction, by which his Subjects might be at variance one with another. It may therefore ſeem ſomewhat ſtrange, that thoſe who profeſs ſo much Loyalty and Duty to the King, ſhould not be carefull to obey his Commands in this, as well as in all other Declarations of his Royal Will and Pleaſure.

It is likewiſe a great Offence to the Eccleſiaſtical Juriſdiction: Thoſe to whom the Government of the Church is committed, and to whom it belongs to cenſure thoſe who are Faulty. They are by the Rules and Orders of the Church to ſhew a Spirit of Meekneſs, to admoniſh him that is taken in a Fault upon complaint made to them; in hopes that the Offender will reform, and that there will be no need of farther Severity.

Dr. *Hammond* by [*Tee that are Spiritual*] in the Text underſtands the Governours of the Church, thoſe to whom the *χαϱισματα, the gifts of the Spirit* were given, in order to the diſcharge of their Miniſterial Function and Offices; That the Apoſtle requires them not to deal too ſeverely, but gently with thoſe that have offended, in hopes of reclaiming them. I may make this uſe of it. If the Governours of the Church are to reſtore Offenders with a Spirit of Meekneſs, I

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am ſure it muſt needs be a juſt cauſe of Offence to them, if the people diſcover a ſpirit of Bitterneſs.

The People have a Rule given them by our Saviour what to do in caſe of Offences, *Matth.* 18. 15, 16, 17. *If thy Brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his Fault between thee and him alone: If he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy Brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more; that in the Mouth of two or three Witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it to the Church,* &c. I am ſure thoſe Perſons are far from obeying the command of our Saviour, and obſerving the Rule which he hath preſcribed, who never tell Offenders their Faults privately but take the firſt occaſion to publiſh them with the greateſt Aggravations. And I am ſure they are very far from obſerving what the Church requires, and therefore are themſelves very fit to be complained

of, and would certainly be cenſured by her Governours if they obſtinately perſiſted in it. There is one Homily of the Church againſt Contention, in which a Spirit of Meekneſs is commended. That by *being Soft, Meek, and Gentle in anſwering, we may overcome our Adverſary with Gentleneſs; eſpecially in matters of Religion and Gods Word, which ſhould be uſed with all Moderation and Soberneſs: For it is better to give place Meekly, than to win the Victory with breach of Charity.* We may by this ſee, what temper of Spirit the Church requires her Sons to be of, and we may conclude that thoſe, who are of a contrary Spirit, do offend thoſe to whom it belongs to cenſure Offenders.

2. It is a great offence to Miniſters. It hinders them from doing that good which otherwiſe they might do, in convincing men of the Neceſſity of uniting, and the Reaſonableneſs of a hearty Compliance with the Church, as it is now eſtabliſhed. A revil-

reviling reproachful Spirit in the People is enough to make them lay the fault upon the Preacher, according to the old ſaying, *like Prieſt like People.* And if they do not, yet it is enough to make them forſake the Church again, or come very ſeldom to it. And it is a hard caſe, that Miniſters muſt ask the People leave, whether they ſhall have an opportunity of convincing men of their Errours and Miſtakes, and treating them with ſuch a Spirit of Meekneſs as the Goſpel requires, and which tends to the reſtoring of them.

I know it is Objected, that Miniſters have not been careful in this matter, but upon all occaſions, have diſcovered a contrary Spirit: They have ſhewed ſuch a Spirit of Bitterneſs as might rather encourage Reviling than ſuppreſs it.

Anſ. I cannot deny but there have been and are ſuch Miniſters, whoſe Zeal for the Churches intereſt have ſo far tranſported them, that they have

not conſidered ſo well as they ſhould have done, that they do not ſhew that temper of Spirit which the Goſpel requires, nor that which anſwers the end which they propound to themſelves, *viz.* The bringing of thoſe to the Communion of the Church who have ſeparated from it, and the more firm Eſtabliſhment of thoſe who have not.

As to the firſt, Sarcaſms and Satyrical Reflections do commonly make thoſe that have been hearers, who are of wavering minds, turn their backs at leaſt upon that Preacher, if not upon all other Miniſters of the Church. And as to the other, that which may be, and I hope is deſign'd to encreaſe in the hearers a diſlike of Separation, doth only more highly exaſperate the minds of ſome againſt Diſſenters, (and I am ſure there is no need of that) but is very diſpleaſing to thoſe that are ſober and ſerious-minded Chriſtians. I have therefore ſomtimes thought that if thoſe men, whoſe Parts and Learning are to be admired, would

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improve them only by meek Inſinuations, and ſtrong and rational Arguments, it would bring Diſſenters to be their Auditors and Admirers, and might make them prefer their Sermons before thoſe which they hear from others.

The Apoſtle was afraid leſt *Timothy*, being a young Preacher (and I ſuppoſe they are Chiefly if not only ſuch who are complained of) ſhould be faulty in this; and therefore requires him that he ſhould look carely to the Temper of his own mind, which is of great moment to every Chriſtian, but eſpecially to a Miniſter. 2 *Tim.* 2. 24, 25. *The Servant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to Teach, patient. In meekneſs inſtructing them that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth.*

However ſome few Miniſters may be blamed for being too ſevere in their Expreſſions, yet I am ſure there are

are others, men of the greateſt Eminency in the Church, who are of that Meek temper which may commend them to all good men: Such a Temper as was in the Prophets of old time, who could not tell how to deliver a harſh Meſſage; but were very forward to expoſtulate the caſe with ſinners, and to tell them their Faults and the puniſhment which they were bringing upon themſelves, after ſuch a manner that there appeared no fault at all in them: Such as *Jeremiah* was, who when he was commanded to tell the *Jewes* of their Captivity which was approaching, declared his grief for it——*Neither have I deſired the woful day, thou knoweſt, Jer.* 17. 16. And ſuch as *Daniel* was, who when he interpreted the dream to *Nebuchadnezzar*, did it with an Aching heart. He was *aſtonied and his thoughts troubled him.* They are of that Temper which the Apoſtle was of himſelf, and which he requires ſhould be in *Timothy*, and all other

other Miniſters of the Goſpel. And they have had very great ſucceſs, for by treating men with a Spirit of Meekneſs, they have brought many Proſelites to the Church. It is well known that many who have Diſſented, coming but accidentally to hear them, have been ſo ſatisfied as to return no more to the wayes of Separation. And what a great Offence muſt it needs be to thoſe Miniſters, if the People ſhall diſcourage thoſe from frequenting the Church, who may be ſo treated there, as to have delight in her Miniſters and her Communion.

3. It is a great Offence to all Sober, Pious, and Orthodox Chriſtians, who are Conformable to the Orders of the Church. It is their hearty deſire, and earneſt Prayers to God, that thoſe who have Diſſented may return to the Communion of the Church, and that they may be treated with the *Spirit of Meekneſs*. It is the grief of their hearts, to ſee what

what cauſeleſs Diviſions there are amongſt us; and therefore they cannot but rejoyce at any opportunity which may tend to the healing of them. I dare ſay that thoſe who have been guilty of Reviling, are none of thoſe many hundreds of Communicants who meet every *Moneth* at the Lords Table; but are ſuch who abſent from the Sacrament; and this Spirit of Bitterneſs which they do diſcover, ſhews that they are not fit to come to it. As I am ſure they are a very bad ſort of men, ſo I hope the number of them is not great. Whoever they are, they are a great Offence to all Pious and Good Chriſtians, who hear of their ill Deportments: which may be of good uſe to thoſe that have been ill treated by them, that they ſhould not be diſcouraged by thoſe Miſcarriages which are as offenſive to us as they are to them. And it ſhould be of good uſe to them that have been guilty in this matter: They

ſhould

ſhould conſider, that (as our Saviour ſaid to his Furious Diſciples) they *know not what Spirit they are of.* They do not conſider that it is neither pleaſing to Magiſtrates, nor Miniſters, nor yet to any good Chriſtians who are of the Communion of the Church and who are as great Enemies to Diviſion and Separation as they can be. But

4. It is a great and unwarrantable Offence to thoſe who have Diſſented. We are, as I have already mentioned, to *ſhew all Meekneſs unto all men*, and we are exceedingly to rejoyce in any opportunity of expreſſing Love and Kindneſs. It is a very great miſtake, if any think that a man cannot ſhew Reſpect and Kindneſs to another, but he muſt be a favourer of his Opinion. We may eaſily propound to our ſelves ſufficient Reaſon, why we ſhould Love every man, let his Judgment be what it will; and I am ſure, that there is the greater neceſſity of ſhewing kindneſs

neſs to thoſe who have Diſſented, that we may be the better able to rectify their Judgments and to convince them of their Miſtakes.

But more particularly; There are three things hinted in the Text, why we ſhould not offend ſuch, but reſtore them with a *Spirit of Meekneſs.*

1. The firſt I take from the Apoſtles Compellation, *Brethren.* As he gives that Title to the *Galatians* who had been exceedingly to blame for indulging their Errors and Miſtakes, ſo ſhould we to thoſe that have ſeparated from us. I know the Devil (as I have already mentioned) hath by his Factors abroad, ſent other Names amongſt us, and they paſs very readily; but if we look into the Scriptures, and conſult the Goſpel, we ſhall find that our Saviour, and his Apoſtles hath only furniſhed us with ſuch Titles as ſignifie Love, ſuch as may oblige and win upon thoſe that have erred, and not ſuch as may provoke or diſcourage them.

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It is true that when our Saviour ſpeaks of thoſe who have ſo offended, that they will not be reclaimed by the ſecret Admonitions of him whom they have *treſpaſſed againſt*, (which is an Argument of a moſt ſweet and pleaſant temper of mind, and therefore ſhewes that the offending Perſon is very ſtubborn and Obſtinate,) nor regard the counſel of *one or two more* (who come as well to plead with them that they may amend, as to be witneſſes againſt them if they continue obſtinate) nor regard the Publick Complaints made againſt them to the Church, (which is the laſt remedy) his direction is, That ſuch ſhould be accounted as a *Heathen Man, and a Publican*, that is, their Society ſhould be avoided, and they ſhould have no Communion with them; or as Dr. *Hammond* explaines it in his Paraphraſe upon the Place, *Look upon him as a deſperate deplored Sinner, fit for the cenſures of the Church to overtake him.* Our Saviour ſaith, *If thy Brother*

BROTHER *offend thee, & thou haſt gained thy* BROTHER, which ſhews that when men have offended they muſt not preſently be caſt off with Wrath and Indignation, but there muſt be the Love of a *Brother* ſtill continuing, and it muſt appear in the Methods which are to be uſed for the reclaiming of him. The reaſon why our Saviour requires that he ſhould be told his fault privately, is, that he may be reclaimed, and not be expoſed to any ſhame or Reproach for what he hath done, by which a man ſhews the Love and Tenderneſs of a Brother. But I am ſure they are very far from obſerving this Rule, and from expreſſing this Love and Tenderneſs of a Brother, who never tell men their faults privately, nor with one or two more, but take occaſion to upbraid them with their faults publickly, and it is at that time too when they are mending their faults, and therefore do not ſo much as want a private admonition. I do the rather mention this

of

of our Saviour, becauſe though it ſeems to relate only to perſonal Offences, *If thy Brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee*, &c. Yet doubtleſs it is to be underſtood of any Offences whatſoever, becauſe they give occaſion to Chriſtians to exerciſe their Charity towards the ſouls of their Brethren, as well as any perſonal Offence committed by them.

The Apoſtles followed this Rule of our Saviour, and required that whatſoever Offences men were guilty of, yet ſtill they were to be accounted *Brethren*, and the Love of a Brother was to be ſhewed to them. I will mention but one, and it hath a Special relation to the caſe that I have in hand, 2 Theſ. 3. v. 14. 15. *And if any one obey not our word by this Epiſtle, note that Man, and have no company with him, that he may be aſhamed*; and what followes? Does the Apoſtle by this encourage them to caſt Contempt and Scorn upon him whereſoever they ſee him? No, but

requires that there ſhould be a tender Love ſhewed to him, *Yet count him not as an enemy, but admoniſh him as a Brother.* Theſe two verſes have a ſpecial relation to that which goes before at the 11*th.* verſe, *For we hear that there are ſome which walk among you diſorderly, working not at all, but are buſy-bodies.* There were ſuch perſons amongſt the *Theſſalonians* as we have too many of them amongſt us; who are diſorderly perſons, that had rather mind any other buſineſs than that which belongs to them; and inſtead of minding their work, they are diſputing the Orders of the Church, and by what Authority it is, that the Governours of it requires this or that to be done, for which there is no expreſs Rule. Such perſons as theſe are, muſt needs be exceedingly offenſive to the Governours of the Church, becauſe of their Haughtineſs and Inſolency: And they muſt needs be very Offenſive to all Religious Members of the Church, becauſe they diſturb

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the Peace, Unity, and Harmony which ſhould be amongſt the Worſhippers of God. But however though their Offences were ſo great, that other Chriſtians of better Tempers were to avoid their company, yet when occaſion was offered they were to admoniſh them as Brethren; as thoſe for whom they ſtill retained a *great Love, and hearty Deſire* for their good. We ought to retain a Love for them, in reference to their temporal Concerns, and to be very ſorry that they ſhould incur any Penalty which may tend to the impoveriſhing of themſelves and Families: This common Ingenuity requires of us, and therefore much more doth Chriſtianity require it. And we ought more eſpecially to be concerned for their Spiritual and eternal Welfare; becauſe they are our Brethren, and they are called ſo from that Relation, which we bear unto our Heavenly Father.

2. A ſecond Intimation which I have from the Text is from the Word προλημφθῇ. As the *Galatians* were overtaken in a Fault, ſo we muſt account thoſe to have been likewiſe, who have diſſented from us. There is a great difference between Errors of Judgment and Errors of Practice. When men are guilty of Errors of Practice, they are Wilful and Obſtinate, and act quite contrary to their own Principles, for they know they are wrong, and offer violence to their own Conſciences; and yet they are to be treated with a Spirit of Meekneſs, that they may be made ſenſible of their Wickedneſs, and reclaimed without puniſhment by the Execution of Laws againſt them, if it can be effected. And if theſe men (of whom it cannot properly be ſaid, that they were overtaken in a Fault, becauſe they knew the Fault before they commited it) are to be treated with a Spirit of Meekneſs in the firſt place, much more then are they to be dealt tenderly

tenderly with, of whom it may very properly be ſaid, that they were *Overtaken.*

No man runs wilfully into an Error of Judgment, but it is through Weakneſs and Ignorance, and Inability of mind, for which he is to be pitied. The minds of Men are liable to ſuch errors and miſtakes, that ſometimes men have thought that they have done well, when they have done the worſt Acts. Our Saviour ſaid to his Diſciples, *John* 16. 2. *The time cometh that whoſoever killeth you, will think that he doth God Service.* His Expreſſion is not, whoſoever killeth you will ſay, but he will *think* that he doth God Service. It ſhall be according to the perſwaſion of his Mind. His erroneous Concience will tell him that he doth God ſervice. I may mention a very ſtrange Error which takes place in our dayes, and does great miſchief to the Church. There are thouſands amongſt us, who ſpeak very reverently of our firſt Reformers from *Popery*; that do exceedingly

ingly honour their memories; and yet they flie as far from the Reformation that was eſtabliſhed by them, as if to return to it were to return to Popery, and all that they did ſignified nothing, but only to that age in which they lived. All the Alterations and Amendments, which have been made ſince their time, ſignifies nothing, but their orders muſt be wholly thrown away. How little did thoſe Holy and Learned Men think, that ſuch things would come to paſs; I mention theſe Inſtances, becauſe ſome men will not be perſwaded, that there is any thing but Wilfulneſs and Obſtinacy that is the cauſe of mens diſſenting, and therefore they ought not to be treated with a Spirit of Meekneſs.

We ought in this caſe to call to remembrance the years that are paſt, to conſider how men were affrighted by their Teachers at any thing that did but in the leaſt, countenance Conformity to the Church of *England*

gland. They were brought up in a Diſlike, or rather an Abhorrence to the Rules and Orders of it. They engaged themſelves in a Communion with men of other perſwaſions, and made choice of a Miniſter to be their Paſtor, who Diſſented from the Church. Nay it may be they are good men, and were converted by that Miniſter or ſome other of the ſame perſwaſion, from the ways of Wickedneſs to the practice of Religion. It is well quoted by a late Learned Writer for the Church, *In the Diviſion of hearts that are in the World, it is certain that ſome good may diſſent.* If we conſider what Educations men have had, and what Principles have been inſtil'd into their minds, we may well conclude that they were overtaken in the fault of Separation, and not that it was a wilful Choice, and therefore they are to be treated with the *Spirit of Meekneſs.*

Beſides

Beſides, we ought likewiſe to conſider, as a Conſequent of this, that Errors of Judgment being deeply fixt, and having been of long continuance, are not eaſily removed. When men have entertain'd an Errour, how weak and unaccountable ſoever it be, yet it is truth to them, and therefore they are very loath to part with it. In this caſe, he is mad who thinks he can ſcold a man out of his Opinion, or that Reviling him will reſtore him. There muſt be another and a milder way uſed: He that would rectifie a mans Judgment, muſt uſe his utmoſt endeavour to get firſt into his Affection. The *Apoſtle* ſaith, *Rom.* 15. 2. *Let every one of us pleaſe his Neighbour, for his good to Edification.* He that would do good to another man, he that deſires his Edification, that he may be built up in the Faith, and that he may grow in Grace and Knowledg, muſt do all that he can or may, to pleaſe him. Their infirmities muſt be born withal

withal (according to what the Apoſtle ſaith in the foregoing *verſe*) and nothing muſt be done to diſcourage them. A man that hath indulg'd an Errour, will ſcarcely hear what another man ſaith, who hath no kindneſs for him: It is to be queſtioned whether he will be convinc'd by him that hath. Remarkable to this purpoſe is that forementioned place, 2 Tim. 2. 25. *In Meekneſs inſtructing them that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth.*

Doct. *Hammonds* Paraphraſe upon the place is thus, *with great Calmneſs and temper, dealing with thoſe that are of different Opinions from us, though in oppoſing us they oppoſe the Truth, as counting it not impoſſible, or hopeleſs, but by the Grace of God they may be brought to Repentance, and ſo come to acknowledge the Truth at length.*

There are Three things very fit for us to take notice of, in what the Apoſtle ſaith. *Firſt*, That to ſhew

a *Spirit of Meekneſs*, is the beſt way to deal with men of different Opinions from us: If any thing prevails with them, that will. If we think to deal otherwiſe with them, it is the way to make them oppoſe the Truth ſtill, and us likewiſe, and all that we can ſay to recover them. *Secondly*, When we deal with men after this manner, Meekly and Gently, yet it is but a *Peradventure* whether it will have any good effect upon them, becauſe men are commonly ſo wedded to their Opinions, that they part not ſo long as they live. *Thirdly*, He that uſeth a Spirit of Meekneſs hath moſt reaſon to expect the aſſiſtance of Gods Grace, who as I have already ſhewed, requires that Temper of mind, and delights in thoſe that have it.

If we conſider, that he that hath diſſented is not only our Brother, but likewiſe that he hath been *overtaken in a Fault*, we are not only obliged to treat him with a Spirit of Meekneſs

from

from a principle of Love and Ingenuity, but from the Neceſſity of the Caſe; becauſe it is our Duty to uſe our utmoſt endeavour to reſtore him, and a Spirit of Meekneſs makes us moſt fit to effect it.

There is ſomewhat which may be conſidered from the word καταρτίζω in the text, which I told you, ſignifies the Setting of a bone that is broken, or out of joynt. Thoſe that have been taken in the fault of Diſſenting may be in great pain, they may have an aching Mind, which is worſe and far more painful than an aching Limb. It muſt be acknowledged, that nothing is ſo tender as the mind and conſcience is (although it ought to be conſidered that there is nothing more apt to error, and men muſt have a care that it be guided by a Rule: and that from the tenderneſs of it, men do not ſtart at the performance of what is their Duty, for fear of hurting it) and therefore we ought to deal gently and tenderly with them as

as he that ſets a bone. They have received ill Principles, and have thought it their duty to ſeparate from us, and that they ſhould diſpleaſe God by having Communion with us; and although they are in ſome meaſure ſatisfied, yet they are ſtill in ſome Fear & Doubt; like a man whoſe bone is ſet, but he hath not recovered his ſtrength. It is very great unkindneſs, or I may ſay, Cruelty to revile a man who is under any diſcompoſure of mind. Beſides, as it is a thing greivous in it ſelf, ſo it may be in another reſpect; becauſe it is a means to encreaſe his pain which he had before. He was afraid leſt he ſhould do amiſs by joyning in Communion with us, and this ill carriage towards him encreaſes his fear, and ſo puts him to more pain. There is no queſtion but that any Alteration in matters of Religion and the Worſhip of God, meets with great aching and regret of mind. We may eaſily underſtand it by making the caſe to be our own. Suppoſe that

we ſhould be required no longer to WorſhipGod by a Publick form(which we count moſt ſolid and ſubſtantial, and is a great advantage to our Devotion,) but ſhould be required to joyn with thoſe that uſe Extemporary prayers, and it appears to us that they have not conſidered before hand what they ſhould ſay when they ſpeak to the Great and Holy God; it would be a great Trouble to us, eſpecially if we had ever doubted whether we might joyn with ſuch men, & in ſuch Prayers.

The Caſe is the ſame; for the trouble of a mans mind is according only to the Opinion which he hath received, which he is not apt to make any doubt of: A *Jew* or a *Turk*, or I may ſay a *Heathen-Idolater* is as much in pain if you require him to alter his Opinion, as he that hath the greateſt evidence for his Religion, and gives the moſt ſatisfactory Reaſon for his way of Worſhipping God. We muſt reſtore our Brother with a Spirit of Meekneſs becauſe he

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is in pain about his being reſtored.

That which now remaines is, that I make ſome Inferences by way of Application.

I. It is of great moment, that men be very careful and diligent in examining the Temper of their own minds, for if they be not, they may not only be in great danger, as to their own immortal Souls, but do great miſchiefs to others, and particularly to that Cauſe which they would advance. Moſt certain it is, that every man may be taken in a Fault, and it is as certain that every man is not fit to tell others of their Faults. He muſt have a great command of his own mind, and be of an excellent temper, who expects to have any influence upon the mind of another that hath done amiſs. Thoſe that have been faulty muſt be reproved for their Faults, but there muſt be Love and Kindneſs tempered with the reproof, or elſe it will only provoke, and not reſtore.

And

And this is not all, but he muſt be a good man himſelf who would make another good, and he that hath offended muſt believe him to be ſo. *David* ſaith, Pſal. 141. 5. *Let the righteous ſmite me, it ſhall be a kindneſs: and let him reprove me, it ſhall be an excellent Oyl which ſhall not break my head.* Where note there are ſome that ſmite, and it is no kindneſs; there is nothing but Malice and Hatred in it. There is a Reproof which breaks the head, and doth rather enrage the Offender than prevail with him to mend his faults. Where the reproof comes from a good man, it is as *an excellent Oyl which doth not break the head.* The Pſalmiſt alludes to a Cuſtome which was in ancient time, to anoint the head with Oyl which caſt a fragrant ſmell. It was wont to be uſed eſpecially at the times of feaſting, and of great mirth and triumph, and to be omitted when there was occaſion of faſting and humiliation. So that the meaning of the *Pſalmiſt* is very high,

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Let him reprove me, and it ſhall be an excellent Oyl: It ſhall be ſweet and pleaſant and joyful to me that I have ſuch a friend that ſhews ſuch true Love and Kindneſs to me, as to reprove me for my Faults. *It ſhall not break my head.* As kind Reproofs are figuratively called *Oyl*, ſo Words are figuratively called *Blows*, which offer great violence, and do great hurt to men. It was *Job*'s complaint to his Friends, who did not treat him kindly, Job. 19. 2. *How long will ye vex my Soul, and break me in peices with words.* There are ſome men whoſe Reproofs are accompanied with ſo much Rage and Bitterneſs, that they may be ſaid to break the head, *i. e.* they are a very great Affront or injury to a Man, or as a more uſual expreſſion, is they *cut men to the Heart.* But the Reproofs of thoſe who are good men, are expreſt with ſo much Love and Tenderneſs, and deſire of doing good to the offending perſon, that they are as an excellent Oyl, both ſweet

ſweet and healing, which offers no injury, nor are they taken ſo, but are very obliging. *David* thought himſelf ſo exceedingly oblig'd by them, that he reſolves to requite them, by being a Friend in adverſity to him that reproved him. And therefore it followes, *My Prayer ſhall be in their Calamities.* Some men when they are reproved for their faults, are of ſuch a malicious nature and diſpoſition, that they rejoyce at any evil which befals their Reprovers, and take that opportunity to inſult over them: But he would take that opportunity to expreſs his Obligations by praying to God for them.

He that reproves another muſt be a good man himſelf, or elſe it is very doubtful whether he can reſtore his Brother: Eſpecially where the Fault is an Error of Judgment, and relates to matters of Opinion. If a man that is ſcandalous in his Converſation, reproves a Schiſmatick, he will be ready to tell him, that he is fitter to be

reproved himſelf, than to reprove others; and that he is not a man fit to diſpute matters of Religion, who hath nothing of the Power of it prevailing in his own mind.

Some men when they have taken another in a fault, ſhould deſire others to reprove them who are more fit to do it, rather than undertake it themſelves; for otherwiſe it may be that inſtead of mending one fault, there may be two more added to it: One in the Reprover, and another in the Offender. The Reprover will be in a paſſion, and diſcover a froward Spirit, and that's one Fault; and he that hath offended may be enraged by it, and not reſtored, and that's another. There are two faults added to that one, which might have been amended by a Spirit of Meekneſs. Or if I may allude once more to the word καταρτίζω: He that reſtores is as one that ſets a Bone, but a provoking Reprover is like one that tampers with the Patient, and only puts him to more pain: Or worſe, inſtead

ſtead of ſetting one bone he breakes another: Inſtead of mending a fault he makes more. As the caſe may be, he that reproves another may, for want of a Spirit of Meekneſs, be in a worſe fault than he was in, whom he ſhould have reſtored, and may do more hurt to the Church and to Religion.

II. When one man takes another in a Fault, let him take care that there be reſpect had to the nature of the Offence which the perſon is guilty of. Whatſoever the Crime be, a Brother and a Fellow-Chriſtian is to reſtore with a Spirit of Meekneſs; but there are ſome who are of ſuch furious Spirits, that the Spirit of Meekneſs is laid aſide upon every ſmall occaſion of Offence. Chriſtians ſhould have a great care, that they avoid a cenſorious Spirit, by which every Offence is repreſented with the greateſt aggravations that it is capable of, and ſometimes far greater. We ſhould

treat Offenders (and I am ſure that is the way to reſtore them) as the Apoſtle treated the men of *Athens*, Acts 17. 22. *Ye men of* Athens, *I perceive that in all things yee are too ſuperſtitious.* He might have told them that they were Idolatrous, which is a far greater crime. It is ſaid, v. 16. *His Spirit was ſtirred in him, when he ſaw the City wholly given to Idolatry.* He was exaſperated to ſee ſuch Learned men Worſhipping falſe Gods; and yet it appears that his Spirit was very Meek and Calm when he applyes himſelf to them to tell them of their Faults. He doth not ſay *yee Idolaters*, but *yee men of* Athens; and he only charges them with Superſtition, becauſe probably if he had charged them with the Worſhip of falſe Gods, their Spirits would have been ſo exaſperated againſt him, as not to regard the force of his ſtrong Arguments, by which he endeavoured to convince them of the true God, and that Jeſus whom he preached to them

them was the Son of God. Superſtition is nothing but what the Worſhippers of the true God may be guilty of. It is mens making Conſcience where no conſcience is to be made, and their being afraid in matters of Religion, and the Worſhip of God, where no fear is; when men account that to be their Duty, and are afraid to neglect it, for which there is no Rule. This is bad and blame-worthy enough, but not to be compared to *Idolatry*. As the Apoſtle uſed a mild Reproof, when he had taken the *Athenians* in a great fault, and rather extenuates than aggravates it, in hopes that he ſhould the better prevail with them, ſo ſhould we do to our fellow Chriſtian. Men muſt have a care of a cenſorious aggravating Spirit. They muſt not look upon the faults of their Brother through a multiplying glaſs, but deal charitably, as men who themſelves are apt to offend, and would not have the worſt conſtruction put upon their own actions. Men

in caſe of Faults, eſpecially where they are not palpably notorious, ſhould ſay as *Jacob* ſaid to his Sons, concerning the Money found in their ſacks, *Gen.* 43. 12. *Peradventure it was an overſight.* There is nothing more common (in this cenſorious age) than for men to condemn thoſe as guilty of the greateſt Crimes, whom the Judge upon a fair Tryal acquits as innocent.

In the caſe of Faults we ſhould ſhew a Spirit of Meekneſs, by doing as the unjuſt Steward did in the Parable, *Luke* 16. 6. The man that owed *a hundred Meaſures of Oyl*, was to *ſit down and write fifty.* We muſt not look at the Faults of others with Aggravations but Extenuations, and that muſt needs be a mighty Advantage to the reſtoring of him, becauſe it is a great Obligation upon him: Eſpecially if his guilty conſcience tells him, that he deſerved to be dealt with more roughly. But ſome men are all for Severity: If the Offender owes

fifty

fifty, they cry write him down a hundred, or a thouſand, Ruine him, for he deſerves no favour.

III. Let men take heed, that they do not deal unjuſtly, by charging the fault of him that is Guilty, upon another who is Innocent: Or, (to come nearer to what I deſign) Let not the faults which have been committed by ſome particular perſons, be charged upon a whole Society. Some are ſo unjuſtly ſevere, that if one be taken in a Fault, they are preſently for puniſhing all that ſort of men; as if when one Malefactor is taken, all muſt dye that have been in his company or of his acquaintance, although they know nothing of that for which he is found guilty. I know very well that in ſome caſes, when one of a Society is taken in a fault, there may be a neceſſity of a watchful eye upon the reſt; becauſe it may be ſuſpected that Companions are alike, and that they are all infected with the ſame bad Prin-

ciples: Which I ſhall have occaſion to ſpeak more of before I conclude this diſcourſe. But this is not a Rule in all caſes, nor doth it juſtifie the unjuſt Severities of thoſe, who condemn a whole Society for the faults of ſome particular perſons. There are grievous inſtances of this nature, and ſuch as have been of moſt pernicious conſequence to the Church, which ought to be conſidered and amended on both ſides. On one hand, if there be any that profeſs themſelves to be the Sons of the Church of *England*, who are of ſcandalous lives, the whole number of them is preſently condemned. If there be ſome particular perſons that are vicious, although the Miniſters of the Church do ſharply reprove them, & although it appears that the Church hath taken all poſſible care, that men may walk in the wayes of Godlineſs, yet it ſhall be lookt upon as a general caſe, and that there is no care taken to prevent or amend it. And, to be ſure, if

if there be but one ſcandalous Miniſter in a City, it ſhall reflect upon the whole Clergy. This is moſt unjuſt and unchriſtian, and makes the Innocent greivous ſufferers for the Guilty: They ſuffering in their good Name for the offences of theſe. It is to accuſe thoſe as guilty of the faults of others, who are ſo far from partaking of them, that they *mourn in ſecret* for them. It is to caſt a reflection uponthe Church, which is the Spouſe of Chriſt, and a ſorrowful Mother, becauſe ſhe hath ſome ſuch Children who are rebellious, and diſobedient to her Laws and Ordinances.

On the other hand, in the inſtance of the late horrid Plot and Conſpiracy againſt the Life of our Soveraign, who is the *Breath of our Noſtrils*, nothing will ſatisfy ſome men but to conclude, that all that diſſent are more or leſs concerned in it; Whereas we have great reaſon to hope, and I have ſome reaſon to ſpeak it, that it hath been of very good Conſequence to ſome of

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the Diſſenters, who were ſo ſtartled and amazed at it, that they have acknowledged the Kings Commands for the execution of his Laws againſt them, to be both juſt and neceſſary.

Thus doth unjuſt and unchriſtian Cenſoriouſneſs prevail, for want of a Spirit of Meekneſs. Let men therefore take heed, that they do not charge the Innocent of being faulty; for oft times it happens to be ſo, and he that abhors the Fault which another is guilty of, is reviled and accuſed after a moſt unchriſtian manner. This is a very dreadful thing. If he that is taken in a fault muſt be reſtored with a Spirit of Meekneſs, what a great fault is he guilty of, who treats him with a Spirit of Reviling and Bitterneſs, who is taken in no fault at all.

IV. I would go a ſtep higher. Let men take heed, that they do not call that a Fault which is commendable, and praiſe-worthy, and then lay aſide a Spirit of Meekneſs too. Some men are

are reviled for that, for which they ought to be praiſed. There are ſome very good men who are dealt withal as *Hannah* was, 1 *Sam.* 1. 14, 15. She was falſly accuſed, and it is worthy our obſervation, that it was by *Eli*, who was a very good man. It is the great fault of many good men, that they are very apt to cenſure and judge amiſs of others, whom they ought to have a high Value and Eſteem for. And although it may proceed from a Jealouſie, which is cauſed by their abhorrence of that which is evil, yet it is by no means to be juſtified. Eli *ſaid unto her, how long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee:* And obſerve what ſhe replyed; *And* Hannah *anſwered and ſaid, no my Lord, I am a Woman of a ſorrowful Spirit: I have drunk neither Wine nor Strong Drink, but have poured out my Soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of* Belial; *for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I ſpoken hitherto.* One would think that *Eli* ſhould

ſhould have asked her, what it was that ſhe was doing; for though it had been very ill to have diſturbed her in her Devotion by asking her any queſtion, yet it was ten times worſe to charge her of being guilty of one of the fouleſt ſins, when ſhee was performing to God one of the moſt acceptable Duties: To load her with an unjuſt Accuſation, when her Soul was burthened with Grief and Sorrow. Yet this is ſometimes the lot of thoſe that are good; of which many Inſtances may be given. And good men and women may well be content to bear it, for it was that which our Saviour met withal when he was in the world. When he went into the company of Sinners, that he might *Call them to Repentance*, he was accuſed of being a Friend to them, as they were Sinners, and guilty of the ſame Sins likewiſe. *They ſaid, behold, a man gluttonous, and a Wine-bibber, a friend of Publicans and Sinners*, Mat. 19. *v.* 19. As this was our Saviours

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Lot when he was in the World, ſo it is likewiſe of many that are Holy and Religious Members of his Church amongſt us. There are many, who becauſe of ſome outward Deportments, (which are Expreſſions of that inward Reverence, which they have for God in their minds, and by which they ſhew likewiſe that Bodily as well as Mental Reverence which is due to God) have been and are called, Popiſh, and Superſtitious, and reviled, as if they were Vile men, when, as *Hannah* did, they are *Pouring out their Souls to God*, with the greateſt Zeal, and moſt fervent Devotion. Thoſe who accuſe them, if they converſed with them, might have cauſe to account them the moſt Pious, and Charitable Chriſtians, ſo far as it is poſſible for men to judg. But this is a great Unhappineſs, and doth exceedingly aggravate the Fault of the Cenſorious: They will not charge a man of his ſuppoſed faults, by which they may be convinc'd of their

their miſtakes, but rail againſt them and Revile them abroad whereſoever they come. Though *Eli* was to blame in charging *Hannah* falſly, yet he was to be commended much more for accuſing her to her face, than if he had taken it for granted, that ſhe was guilty of it, and then reproacht her by an unjuſt Defamation behind her back. He ſpake his mind to her, and was ſatisfied that he had been miſtaken, and ſaid to her, *Go in peace and the God of Iſrael grant thee thy Petition, that thou haſt asked of him.* If thoſe that accuſe others, would converſe with them, and tell them of what they think to be a fault in them, they might, poſſibly, be ſatisfied that there was no fault but a commendable practice which they ought to imitate.

There are others likewiſe, who have been accuſed, as our Saviour was, of being Vicious, becauſe they have been in the Company of Vicious men, although they never com-

comply'd with them in any thing that is bad, but have taken all occaſions to reprove and admoniſh them. Thus have men been injur'd in their Reputations, by falſe Aſperſions, both as to their Principles, and their Practices, when both of them have been very commendable. And if it be a Chriſtian Duty to reſtore him that is taken in a fault, with a *Spirit of Meekneſs*, how Unchriſtian are they who make a Vertue to be a fault, and condemn it with a Spirit of Bitterneſs.

V. I muſt add to all this, that thoſe who are ſo ready to accuſe the Innocent, and to condemn thoſe that are religious and good Men, are commonly ſuch as are guilty of very great Faults themſelves, and yet will not be reſtored, nor endure ſo much as to be told of their faults. We commonly find thoſe that are moſt faulty themſelves, finding moſt Faults with others. They do not ſo much as ſee *a mote in* their *Brothers*

Brothers eye, and yet they find great Fault with him; and in the mean while they muſt not be ſo much as told of a very great *Beam* that is in their *own eye*. If thoſe that are Spiritual are required to reſtore them that are faulty with a *Spirit of Meekneſs*, what a moſt notorious fault is it when they that are Carnal, treat thoſe that are Spiritual, whom they have not taken in a fault, with the Spirit of Bitterneſs.

That which follows ſhall be by way of Exhortation, and Advice, both to thoſe that have Diſſented from the Church, and thoſe that have not. I begin with thoſe that have ſeperated, but are now come, I hope, with Religious minds to joyn with us in the Worſhip of God: Let me deſire you to ſuffer a word of Exhortation, and as I have earneſtly contended with others, to ſhew a *Spirit of Meekneſs* towards you, (and I value not the Cenſures of furious and unreaſonable men for what

I have done) ſo I do intreat you with no leſs Importunity, that you will *receive with Meekneſs* that which I have to offer to you.

1. Let me deſire you to take care, that a *Spirit of Meekneſs* be not wanting in you towards others that are of conformable Principles to the Rules and Orders of the Church. They that complain that a *Spirit of Meekneſs* is wanting in others, ſhould take great care that it be not wanting in themſelves. They that would not be bitten, ſhould take care that they do not bite. They that would not be Reviled, muſt take care that they do not Revile others. You know that what I have already mentioned is very true, *viz.* That many of the Religious Members of the Church of *England*, have been accuſed of being Popiſh and Superſtitious, and of *having a Form of Godlineſs* (though ſome will ſcarce allow that) *but not the Power of it*; whereas it appears to Sober and Unprejudic'd Perſons, that

they abhor both Popery and Superſtition, and that they have the Power of Godlineſs, as well as the Form of it. It is my earneſt deſire that you ſhould never be Reproached for that which is true, I hope therefore that you will take care (for it is a dreadful thing) that you Revile not others for that which is falſe. And, the truth is, I know no Advice more neceſſary to be given, than that all ſober Chriſtians, whatſoever their Perſwaſion be, ſhould make it their buſineſs to diſcourage Revilers, and Evil-ſpeakers, upon all occaſions whatſoever, although they be of the ſame Opinion with themſelves. It is great pitty that all men do not conſider the truth of a good old ſaying, *A good word does no hurt, and a bad word does no good.* Revilers and Evil-ſpeakers are certainly the moſt miſchievous men of any party whatſoever. But this is not all that I have to deſire of you, therefore,

2. If

2. If you would not be offended this way, by opprobrious Language or uncivil Carriage; let me deſire you to take care that you give no offence any other way, as I muſt needs ſay, too many do, and I will ſhew you wherein.

1. There are a great many of you who caſt Contempt upon one Ordinance for the ſake of another: Such I mean, as will come to hear the Sermon, but will not come to joyn with their fellow Chriſtians, in lifting up their hearts to God, in the uſe of the publick Prayers of the Church. Gods houſe muſt be only the houſe of Preaching to them, and not *the houſe of Prayer*. The great Reaſon is, that they have heard it ſpoken againſt by thoſe whom they have accounted the beſt men, and therefore they cannot be ſatisfied to make uſe of it. By the ſame Reaſon if thoſe Miniſters had commended it, they would have liked it very well. If this be the Reaſon (and I am confident

fident there are many men, whoſe Conſciences tell them that it is ſo) what Infallibility do they attribute to their Preachers? And what Partiality are they guilty of? For if they granted the Miniſters of the Church to be Religious men, and ſuch as aim at the Glory of God, and the good of mens Souls, they would for the ſame Reaſon be convinc'd, that it is an acceptable Worſhip of God.

Some have been ſo weak and miſled as to think *Extemporary* Prayers to be the beſt, becauſe they are dictated by the Spirit of God. This proceeds from a high Opinion that ſome people have of their Miniſters, for I never heard of any Miniſter that pretended to any ſuch Divine Inſpiration.

The weakneſs of this Conceit hath been ſufficiently expoſed, and therefore I will not enlarge upon it. However I will ſpeak ſomething, and I hope you will not think that I forget my Text, and lay aſide a *Spirit*

of

of Meekneſs. I have ſeriouſly conſidered of it, and I can not tell of any Spirit that *extemporary* Prayers come from, more than other Prayers, unleſs it be a Spirit of Oppoſition, to the Publick Lyturgy of the Church; for before that Oppoſition, not only ſome Miniſters of the Presbyterian Perſuaſion, but likewiſe ſome of the *Independants* made uſe of a ſet Form; of which I could give particular inſtances from the acknowledgments of men of both Perſwaſions. I may add to this, that if *extemporary* Prayers were really more beneficial to the People, and did not tend only to the gratifying of their curioſity; or to the cheating of them by a vain conceit, that they are dictated by the Spirit of God; or that New words when men pray are the Gift of Prayer (a new-coyn'd expreſſion for I find it not in the Scriptures) there are many Miniſters who would Pray *extempore* as well as they, and no queſtion but uſe would

ſoon make great perfectneſs in it. Or, if they could underſtand, that New words every time they pray to God would be more acceptable to him, and tend more to the good of the People, they would uſe a new Prayer every Lords Day, which the Church doth not forbid them. I muſt needs ſay, that it is a very ſtrange Conceit, that men ſhould think it unneceſſary, when they pray to the Great God, to bethink themſelves before hand what they ſhall ſay to him; or that it ſhould not be a great happineſs to the People, that they have a wholſom Form preſcribed them, in the uſe of which they may lift up their hearts to God with great and acceptable Devotion.

There is another Reaſon, why many come not into the Church till the Prayers be done; And that is, an apprehenſion they have that our Prayers are taken out of the *Maſs-Book*, and therefore this were for them to Pray as the *Papiſts* do. I ſhould not need to mention this, or make any

any Reply to it, if I could be ſure that the Books which are publiſhed for ſatisfaction in theſe caſes, are peruſed by thoſe who have been diſſatisfied. However I ſhall ſpeak very briefly concerning it, and with a *Spirit of Meekneſs*.

Suppoſe we pray as the Papiſts do. Nay, ſuppoſe we Pray in many things as the *Turks* do, who Worſhip the True God, as well as we; there is no hurt at all in it. Beſides, our uſing the ſame Form of Prayer with them, can be no Diſrepute to us, or occaſion of any ſtarting from it, if we conſider what our Religion is, as it relates to the Church of *Rome*. It is Reformation from them, and not a Malicious Deſtruction of them. Reformation muſt only be the excluding of that which is bad, and the retaining of that which is good. If it were Malice or Hatred againſt them, we ſhould then indeed reject all that they do. Our Reformers wiſely and Piouſly

conſidered that Peace and Communion with them, and with all that profeſs Chriſtianity, is exceedingly to be deſired: But in regard of ſome horrible Corruptions that were broken in amongſt them, they could not have Communion with them. For theſe they forſook them, and would rather dye at the Stake, (and ſome of them did ſo) than have Communion with them.

The Faults of the Church of *Rome* are great enough, although we do not call thoſe Faults that are not; and from hence it is, that though our Divines and other Champions of the Church, do not cry out of every thing that is done by them, and call it *Popery*; yet like ſober, wiſe, judicious and Valiant men for the Truth, they keep their ground, and do not give an inch to the groſs Uſurpations and Errors of the Papiſts: As the Popes Supremacy, Infallibility, Tranſubſtantiation, Praying to Saints, and Purgatory, &c. Let not any therefore ſtart at

thoſe Prayers which are wholſome Forms, but joyn in a holy and devout Uſe of them; and inſtead of bearing a grudge againſt us for them, let them not ſo much as bear a grudg againſt the Papiſts, but let us all joyn together in praying to God for them as well as others, that God would *bring them into the way of Truth, who have erred and are deceived*, as well as others.

3. There are ſome who will not hear the Prayers, much leſs joyn in the uſe of them, becauſe of the Surplice. I am almoſt aſhamed to mention it, and I am very ſorry that people ſhould retain ſuch weak Prejudices. Some men plead Conſcience for abſenting upon that account, which is only an argument of a very Weak mind. I cannot call that a tender Conſcience but a ſhy or ſtarting conſcience, or I may call it an affrighted conſcience. All the account that I think can be given of it is, that men were ſcared at the ſight of it when they were young,

and

and they never cared for coming neer it ſince. Or, they heard of ſome that were ſcared at it, and therefore they do not care for ſeeing it. If any charge us that we place any Religion in it, I might give them a down-right anſwer, if it were not for a *Spirit of Meekneſs*. When ſober men can think it a reaſonable thing, that Judges ſhould leave off their Robes, and Schollars in the Univerſity ſhould wear no Gowns, becauſe there are ſome who are offended at them; I ſhall think it reaſonable that Miniſters ſhould leave off their Surplices. In the mean while I pity their ſickly weak-ſighted Conſciences, who cannot endure to ſee a white Garment; and do think that they may be numbred amongſt the frenzy ones, to whom it would be more proper to give Phyſick than Arguments. Let not any therefore upon ſuch miſtakes and weak Conceits turn their backs upon that great and ſolemn part of Gods Worſhip, from which his Houſe hath its

its denomination and is called a *Houſe of Prayer*, for they can never *give an account of* themſelves *to God* for ſo doing, unleſs they can imagine that God will make their Paſſions and Prejudices to be his Rule of judging.

2. There are others who do not abſent from the Prayers, but give very great offence by their Unreverence at that time, when others are praying to God. Either by ſitting carelesly, as if they could hear them, but they cannot joyn their Devotions with others in the uſe of them, which is the Language of ſome concerning them: And they think that it is a very great Adventure, and that they deſerve very well from the Church, for ſuch a Compliance as this is. If this Caſe be truly and rightly conſidered, it may make all men afraid of enclining to the ways of Schiſm and Separation; for what is this but a publick Affront to God, and a manifeſt Contempt

tempt of that way of Worſhip, by which it is acknowledged, that our Fore-Fathers have ſerved God acceptably, and we hope that we do ſo likewiſe. And what a great Offence muſt this needs be to thoſe who are Religious and Devout, to ſee what contempt is caſt upon God at the time of his publick Worſhip and Service, and how they are accounted but Vain and Idle, by ſhewing Reverence to God at the time of their Devotions. We all acknowledge, that all Outward ſhew of Reverence to God is Vain, and Hypocritical, if there be not an Inward dread of God in the mind. It is for a man to *draw near* to God *with his Lips*, when his *Heart is far from him.* But it is a ſtrange Extream that men run into, if to avoid that Hypocriſie, there ſhall be no outward ſhew of Devotion at all. It is as if the Souls of men were in their Bodies, like Statues, which can make no outward ſign of what is within.

Yet

Yet if this were all, it would not be ſo offenſive. If thoſe that Kneel, or otherwiſe expreſs their Devotions in crowded Congregations, were ſatisfied, that thoſe who have Diſſented, do joyn their hearts with them in their Prayers to God, it would be a great ſatisfaction to them: But it is ſcarcely any breach of Charity, (becauſe it hath appeared as well by Words, as Deportments) to ſay, that they only ſit with Patience, during the time of Prayers, till they can hear the Sermon. I need not tell you, that every man hath naturally ſo much Reverence for that Deity, which he worſhips, that it is a great offence to him to hear or ſee the leaſt contempt caſt upon his Religion, by Words or Actions. This is one Reaſon, why *Turks* and *Heathens* will not endure Chriſtians to come into their publick Places of Worſhip. They know that we deſpiſe their Religion; and if we ſhould go into their *Temples*, it would only be to gratifie our Curioſity

Curioſities, and that would be an Offence and a great Diſturbance to them. It were well if all thoſe that are of other Religions, were forbidden to come into our Congregations, that they might not ſee that unreverence amongſt many Chriſtians, which we could not ſee amongſt them, if we were in their Congregations. If thoſe that Worſhip the Gods, *which are yet no Gods*, are, from a natural principle of Reverence to a Deity, ſo offended that they will not endure the leaſt contempt of their Religion? If it were ſuch an offence to *Nebuchadnezzar*, that he thought a *Furnace* could ſcarce be hot enough for thoſe that would not bow down to the Image which he had ſet up? How can men be blam'd for being offended, at thoſe who will not joyn with them in ſhewing Reverence to him, whom they all acknowledge to be the true God?

Before I paſs this particular, I would ask him that is only in Love with

with the way of Worſhipping God in ſeparate Congregations, this queſtion. Suppoſe that one of thoſe, who think they cannot ſerve God ſo acceptably any other way as in the Form of Prayer which the Church hath preſcribed, ſhould come into a ſeperate Congregations, and all the time that the Miniſter is Praying, and the people expreſſing the moſt ardent Devotion; ſhould ſit careleſly, and rather ſhew his Contempt of that way than joyn in it; would it not be a great Offence to you? Would you not think him to be not only irreligious but very uncivil? I am confident you would be exceedingly offended; why then will you offend thoſe who are of the Churches Communion, who ſerve God after the Ancient way of Chriſtian-Worſhip, and that which is approved of by other Reformed Churches, as not only Lawful, but very uſeful and profitable for the Souls of men.

There

There are others who are guilty of a far greater Offence, and they are ſuch as are ſo far from joyning with others, and lifting up their hearts to God with them in their Prayers, that they ſpend that time in *talking of Vanity*, and (if what I have been credibly informed be true) *of Lies* alſo. They make the Houſe of God to be the place in which they meet to reproach and ſlander their neighbours. This hath been ſo great an Offence, that ſome who have been their Pew-fellowes have been exceedingly (as well they might) diſturbed at it. They do not love the *Common-Prayer*, and therefore, that they may loſe no time, they will be ſerving the Divel till Prayers be done.

There is another kind of Unreverence, and that is mens having their Hats on, all the time that the Miniſter is Preaching. Nay, there are ſome who will not be uncovered whilſt the Miniſter is Praying, but only remove their Hats from one part of their heads to ano-

another, as if there might be ſome kind of outward Reverence expreſt to Almighty God at the time of Praying, but it is no matter how little it be. But ſuppoſe their being covered be only at that time when the Miniſter is Preaching, and ſuppoſe that there were nothing to be ſaid to prove that it is indecent and unreverent, (for it is not my preſent buſineſs to enquire into it) yet it is the occaſion of Offence? And whilſt no man can plead the breach of any Law by it, I am ſure (to ſpeak the beſt) it is a great breach of that Ingenuity which Chriſtianity requires in men, in that it gives great offence. When men come into the Church, where they ſee thoſe that are the Frequenters of it with their heads uncovered, and they keep their Hats on, it is hard for the moſt Charitable to ſay leſs than that there is thereby Contempt caſt upon thoſe who are in another poſture, and that it doth implicitly accuſe them of Folly and Superſtition in the ſervice of

God. I may ſuppoſe that which muſt not be granted, that if there were nothing to be ſaid for it, but that it were an Offence purely taken and not given, yet ſince it is an offence and a diſturbance to the minds of men in the Worſhip of God, and of thoſe men too whom Authority doth commend and countenance in ſo doing; He that is Pious, Prudent and Ingenuous, will be careful that he be not the occaſion of that offence.

Thus have I ſhewed what the Offences are, by which the minds of men, who are Conformable to the Church, are exaſperated againſt thoſe that have diſſented from her Communion, to the end that they may take all poſſible care to avoid giving thoſe offences, and to do that which may oblige thoſe with whom they come to Worſhip God, and not offend them. If you would be treated with a *Spirit of Meekneſs*, and are not willing to meet with any provoking Words or Actions, you muſt have a care that you

you do not offend others.

But this is not all that I have to deſire of you. Methinks it is a hard caſe, if Chriſtians ſhall think it enough if they give no offence, who are commanded by our Saviour to love one another, and to *be one as* he and his *Father are one.* That which I earneſtly deſire is, that you would not think it ſufficient, if you ſometimes come to the Church, and ſhew ſome Reſpect to the Service of God, but that there be a hearty and ſincere Compliance, which will certainly be the greateſt Satisfaction imaginable to you, and then there will be no ſuch occaſion for the *Exerciſe of Meekneſs.*

Conſider I beſeech you the dreadful miſchiefs which Diſunion and Separation have been the cauſe of in our dayes, beyond what the Sobereſt of the diſcontented Party ever thought of. Conſider how the life of the King was lately in danger by thoſe, who either wholly abſented from the Church, or we are ſure never receiI 2 ved

ved their pernitious Principles from it. Conſider how unſucceſsful God hath made all Attempts againſt the Church, when they who were no Lovers of it had thoſe advantages to eſtabliſh another Conſtitution, which they cannot now hope for.

And conſider I beſeech you, how infinitely it will tend to the Churches Peace, to the Reputation of the Reformed Religion, and to the Good of your own Souls, if you could be ſatisfied to forſake the wayes of Separation, and have Communion with that Reformed Church, whoſe Miniſters and People do hate Popery, and earneſtly deſire the promotion of true Holineſs and Goodneſs, as much as you can do, howſoever Prejudices and a Miſunderſtanding have been the cauſe of moſt Unchriſtian Cenſoriouſneſs. And it may tend exceedingly to your Satisfaction, and avoid all occaſions of Reviling and Bitterneſs, if theſe Rules may be obſerved.

1. Let

1. Let not Education be of any force in this matter. I know that it is a dreadful thing for men to forſake the practice of Religion, in which they have been educated. It is a fearful thing for thoſe that have been brought up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, to forſake their Education, and to fall into the practice of ſin and Wickedneſs. But for men to make this their Rule, as to Modes and Circumſtances, and matters of Opinion in Religion, is altogether unaccountable; becauſe a man may as well be brought up in an Error, as otherwiſe, and becauſe he may ſerve God as acceptably after another manner than that in which he hath been educated.

We know that a great Cauſe of our Diviſions hath proceeded from this, that men have been brought up in a Diſlike of that way of Worſhip which is now eſtabliſhed, and have from their Cradles received Prejudices againſt it: But yet there is no-

nothing more unreaſonable, than to make that to be a Rule: For if it be, every one may conclude that to be the beſt Religion that comes firſt, which certainly every one will grant to be very abſurd. And whereas ſome think they are right, becauſe they received their Principles from thoſe men whom they accounted Holy and Religious: I may reply, that there is no Party whatſoever, but have Zealots who are of a ſtrict and ſevere life. The Hereticks of old could never have done ſo much miſchief to the Church, if they had not been of exemplary Lives. Education muſt therefore be wholly laid aſide, and men muſt conſider with themſelves, that if what is required of them be not repugnant to Gods Word, and Inconſiſtent with true Piety and Holineſs, the Churches Peace, and the neceſſity of Union amongſt Chriſtians, muſt ſilence all the ſecret pleadings of Education, which I know are of themſelves very powerful.

Beſides

Beſides, if it be granted that many are educated and brought up in a falſe Perſwaſion, and that the men of that Party, whatever it is, may be of ſuch unblameable Lives, that they may from thence miſtake, and conclude that they are right; I may in the next place tell you, that we of this age have the greateſt Cauſe, that ever any had, to ſuſpect our Educations, becauſe of the many Opinions that were amongſt us, when we were young, which were eſpouſed by men of ſtrict Lives, and very good Converſations. I cannot therefore but highly commend thoſe (both Miniſters and others,) who do not hang the Clogg of their Opinions upon the Conſciences of their Children, but are very willing that they ſhould comply with the Church of *England*.

2. Lay aſide, or rather abandon thoſe Prejudices which you have heard and received, as indeed Unchriſtian. You have heard that the Miniſters and People of the Church of *England*

are ſo ſcandalous, that good and holy men cannot have Communion with them. Let me tell you with a Spirit of Meekneſs.

1. That it is doubtful, whether ever any age produced Miniſters of greater Eminency, both for Piety and Learning, than this hath done; or whether ever any age had Chriſtians in it more eminent for good Works, than thoſe which this Age hath produced, who are of the Communion of the *Church* of *England*; though they make no noiſe of it. It was not long ſince confeſt, by one who is no Lover of the Church, that the men of her Communion do moſt good by their great Liberality. I ſhould not have mentioned this, if a falſe Aſperſion did not make it neceſſary.

It hath been objected by ſome, that we are no True Church, becauſe God hath not bleſſed the Miniſtry of it, with the Converſion of Souls. I pray God convert them that ſay ſo. Thoſe who heartily comply with the Church,

may

may find a very conſiderable number of Holy Communicants, and bleſſed be God for it, Miniſters have been very ſucceſsful in *bringing many*, young Perſons and others, *to Righteouſneſs*.

2. Thoſe that are vicious, and profeſs a great Reſpect to the Church, are a great Grief to thoſe Pious *Miniſters* and *Chriſtians* who are lovers of the Church

3. Whereas men pretend to ſeperate upon that account, I muſt tell them, That Debauchery and Wickedneſs, are not ſo much the Cauſe of Diviſions, as they are the Effect of them. Death-beds have complained, that becauſe there have been ſuch Doubts which is the Right way, men have reſolved to take no way but the way of Sin and Wickedneſs. I appeal to any ſober man in the World, whether he doth not think, that Diviſion and Separation hath been a great Cauſe of that Atheiſm and Profaneneſs which hath of late abounded: And I appeal to any ſober man, whether a hear-

hearty Compliance with the Church of *England*, (by which there would be care taken both of young and old, by the execution of Cenſures againſt thoſe that are Vicious and Irregular,) would not tend exceedingly to the reſtraint of Wickedneſs, and the promoting of true Holineſs and Goodneſs.

Men have diſſented from a Pretence, that they reap great benefit to their Souls by it; but I am ſure if they were not prejudiced, and did underſtand and conſider the methods of the Church of *England*, they would have little reaſon to think that any Conſtitution can tend more to the good of Mens Souls. But however men muſt not tear the body of Chriſt in peices, pretending that they do it for the benefit of their ſouls. The Church is Chriſts Body, which muſt not be divided upon any pretence whatſoever.

3. Conſult both ſides. Be as willing to hear what is ſaid on one ſide, as on the other. If men take in with one

one Party, and conclude that they are right, and that continuance in their way is Perſeverance, and to comply with any other were Apoſtacy, which I find to be the Conceit of a great many, and therefore they will not hear what others have to ſay to them; it is no wonder if men continue obſtinate and perverſe. If men dealt fairly and Chriſtianly in this caſe, they ſhould go to ſome Miniſters of the Church, and tell them, that they would gladly comply with them, if they could be ſatisfied concerning ſome things which they doubt of, declaring what their Doubts are, and that they are very willing to receive ſatisfaction, that they might not offend by ſeparating from the Church: If men did ſo, our Diviſions would quickly be at an end. And if they do not, they have not *followed the things that make for Peace*; for they never endeavoured to be ſatisfied concerning that which they doubted of.

There

There are two things which I will mention as Motives to this Complyance. *First*, There are many Good and Holy Chriſtians, who are by this means fully ſatisfied, and are not only Devout in the uſe of the publick Prayers, but frequent Communicants at the Lords Table. *Secondly*, Thoſe who are thus ſatisfied, muſt needs have far greater Peace, than thoſe who ſtill continue in the wayes of Separation. They avoid outward Troubles, and whatſoever Diſturbances come to the Church or State, they are not the Occaſion of them. Their minds are not royled and exaſperated as others are, but they live in Obedience to the Laws of their King, and *Lead a quiet and peaceable Life, in all Godlineſs and Honeſty.*

I will conclude with a brief Exhortation to thoſe that are Lovers of the Church. You ſee that I have not choſen this Subject, in Favour of thoſe that have Diſſented, but have been guilty of a long Unwonted Digreſſion,

on, that whileſt I am contending with you to ſhew a *Spirit of Meekneſs* towards them, I might ſpeak of thoſe things to them, with the ſame *Spirit*, which have occaſioned their offending of you; which otherwiſe had been very improper from this Subject; thereby uſing my utmoſt endeavour to *reſtore them* to the *Communion* of the *Church*. I will now renew my Requeſt, and leave it with you that there may be no more Complaints made, that this *Spirit* is wanting in you. I will add but very little to what I have ſaid.

1. Conſider that a *Spirit of Meekneſs* is a good Reputation to the Church, which you are Lovers of. *Church of England-Men*, have been Eminent for their bearing the Reproaches of others: It is great pitty that they ſhould be accuſed of Reviling others. Beſides, when men give ill Words, it is a ſign of a bad Cauſe, and that they have but weak Arguments, and that is a diſparagement

ment to the Church, whoſe Sons have kept their ground, and Valiantly encountred all that oppoſed them on every ſide, by the force of Arguments.

2. I would add ſomewhat concerning thoſe that are come to our Congregations.

1. Conſider that they are men of the beſt Tempers, amongſt thoſe that have Diſſented. There are others who ſpeak as ill of us, as if we were *Jews* or *Pagans*, that we are Enemies to Holineſs, and Deſtroyers of mens Souls, *&c.* And yet if we have opportunity, we ought to treat thoſe men with a *Spirit of Meekneſs*: (And I am ſure, we ought to Pitty them, and earneſtly to Pray to GOD for them.) Surely then it doth not become us, to be unkind to thoſe who are leſs Cenſorious, and more Compliant.

2. Conſider what theſe men endure from thoſe who are ſo Cenſorious. They write Letters, and tell them

them of Apoſtacy and Back-ſliding, and many are more incens'd againſt them, than they are againſt us. It is a very hard caſe, that they ſhould both ſuffer by us, and by them for their beginning to comply with us. This may make them deſperate, and give way to a Temptation, to forſake that Religion, which we all contend for.

3. If we do not treat them with a *Spirit of Meekneſs*, we ſhall wholly diſcourage the good Inclinations of others who have diſſented. If they hear that their Brethren who come before, meet with any Repulſe, they will be very loath to follow them; who otherwiſe might come and help to fill Gods Houſe, and be of the number of thoſe who Surround the Lords Table.

GOD of his infinite mercy grant that all Chriſtians, whatſoever their opinions are, may lay aſide all Unchriſtian Paſſions and Prejudices: That we may

may follow peace with all men: That we may not make it our buſineſs to pleaſe our ſelves, but that it may be our great concern to pleaſe God in the firſt place, and our Neighbour in the next: That we may not rejoyce in any evil which befals others, but may endeavour in Chriſtian Love and Kindneſs, to rectify their miſtakes, and pray to the God of Peace for his Bleſſing upon our endeavours, by which men may underſtand the neceſſity of Obedience to Government in all lawful things, that they may not ſuffer, but that they and we may all joyn together in Serving and Worſhiping God in this World, and in Singing Everlaſting Praiſes, and Hallelujahs *to him in the World to come.*

FINIS.